

# I GO A-FISHING

J. BRUNTON BLAIKIE

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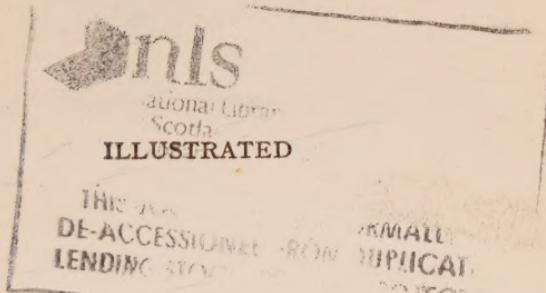
*Brauning on Laerdal.*

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# I GO A-FISHING

BY

J. BRUNTON BLAIKIE, M.D.



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*First published in 1928*



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To  
EDWIN BRAMWELL  
HOWARD BESSEMER  
AND OTHER FISHING FRIENDS  
TO WHOSE COMPANY  
I OWE  
MUCH OF THE PLEASURE  
OF MY SPORT



## PREFACE

ALL my life I have been fond of fishing. The prospect of being in possibly beautiful and certainly peaceful surroundings with a rod in my hand has helped to keep me cheerful when the clouds of anxiety and the weight of responsibility and worry have darkened the horizon and pressed down on my spirits.

If these jottings of my fishing experiences serve a like purpose for others, my aim in writing them will be fulfilled. Quite rightly, every sportsman thinks his special sport the best; a fisherman, however, differs from others in not *thinking* it, but *knowing* it; and certainly to a busy man, constantly rubbing shoulders with his fellows, nothing can offer greater rest and peace.

You leave your work, overwhelmed maybe, with worry, and uncertain of your right course of action. You go off fishing and—this is essential—you cast all your anxieties behind you and think only of catching fish. When you

## P R E F A C E

come back to your work, you find that all is straightened out, and, at a glance, you see the solution of problems you had thought almost unanswerable.

But all this is by the way. I would despise the man who fishes as he would take a medicine —for the benefit he gets from it—just as I would look down on the man who plays Bridge in order to make money.

My thanks are due to Mr. George Beard, Mr. B. S. Bramwell, Mr. Gerald Craig Sellar, Colonel Simpson and Mr. Guthrie Watson for the photographs with which my book is embellished.

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# I GO A-FISHING

## CHAPTER I

*My first trout—Burn fishing—Night fishing on the Tweed—My first salmon—A slipped knot.*

My fishing experiences began when I was very young. My childhood was spent on the Scottish Border, and several small burns run through the grounds of my home. I well remember my first trout : I was four years old when I caught it. My brother, some years older than I, went fishing in one of these burns and I was allowed to go with him.

Imagine a wide stretch of uplands covered with coarse grass and bracken, and here and there an ancient tree, survivor of the once great Ettrick Forest. In a hollow, falling down the hill-side, is a burn, so small that a child can step over it. In places the burn is so narrow that it is impossible to drop a worm in it.

My brother drops his worm into every tiny

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pool, and presently there is a flash as a trout darts out from under the projecting bank, seizes the worm and takes it back with it to its den. I stand with breathless excitement watching the jerking of the line as the trout munches the bait. Then my brother gives a quick hoist of the rod, a magnificent trout of almost 2 oz. flies a foot into the air, and then—oh horror!—falls back into the pool.

My brother drops the rod, takes off his coat, rolls up his sleeves, and lies down on the bank, at the same time telling me to put my hands under the end of the bank to prevent the trout escaping that way. He shoves his arms under the bank, and, as he does so, I feel the trout glide into my waiting hands. I close them convulsively on it, and jump up, wild with excitement, the trout clenched in my fists. . . . I have caught very many trout, sea-trout, and salmon since, but I do not think I have ever had such a thrilling moment as then.

It must have been a couple of years later before I caught my first trout on a rod, and it was quite a long time after this before I began to fish with fly.

Before I could use a fly rod, however, I had many delightful days fishing with the worm.

I remember my father taking a small cousin and me to a little river some miles away. It had been heavy rain the day before, and the river

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was big and brown. Our rods were innocent of reels and we used a single bait hook with a couple of sinkers. We spent the entire day at one pool. The river ran with a strong rush under the bushes opposite, and, at our side there was a grassy bank and a slow stream.

I had hardly dropped in my worm when there was the jerk of a bite. I waited and then heaved the trout on to the bank. And so it went on for several hours.

When we had—most reluctantly—to stop, we had got seventy-two trout weighing about 10 lb.

I am afraid my first trout was not the only one I caught with my hands—“gumping” as we called it.

I remember one day going with another small boy to “gump.” In the burn there was a deep pool with, at one side, a steep overhanging bank. We suspected this bank of harbouring a large trout. It was arranged that my companion should explore the bank and that I should sit on his legs to prevent his slipping in. Sure enough, a big trout darted out and hid under another bank higher up the stream.

In my excitement, I forgot my duties and jumped up to pursue the fish. The moment I did so, my friend glided head first into the pool.

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He was a taciturn lad, but I shall not easily forget his look of bitter indignation as he betook himself home—very wet, a cynic in the making.

Another time, when “gumping,” I put my hand down a submerged rat hole. I was violently bitten and sprang to my feet, dragging from the hole a large eel, hanging to my middle finger, which it had swallowed and bitten almost to the bone. The eel wriggled quickly back into the burn, but I finally caught it. It weighed 2 lb.—the largest fish I ever got out of the burns at home.

There is a considerable amount of skill needed to “gump” successfully, but I do not intend to give instructions about it. Never, I fear, can it be a legitimate sport.

I was a big boy before I learned to fish with fly. Fly fishing was impossible on small burns, and until I possessed a bicycle, the large streams were too far afield for me. Once I had tasted the joys of fly fishing I used to spend every possible hour on the Tweed or its tributaries. It was a number of years later before I first used the dry fly.

I remember, soon after I could cast a fly, starting off one summer morning at break of day to fish a free stretch of Tweed. At nine o’clock

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in the morning I stopped, thoroughly contented with myself and my catch. As I was leaving the waterside I met an old professional fisherman who asked me how I had got on. I told him, with pride, that I had about five dozen trout. "Let's see them," said he sceptically. Only too pleased, I poured the fish on the bank. There was a pause, and then—"Aye," said he, "ye've got three trout; the rest are smolts." I slunk home crestfallen, devoutly hoping I might not meet a water bailiff.

It was about this time that I began to keep a record, and for over thirty years I have jotted down particulars of every day's fishing I have had. I can therefore guarantee the accuracy of weight and numbers in my reminiscences.

It is remarkable how very different the fishing is in free and in preserved waters. Even thirty years ago one had to be a very skilful fisher to get large baskets of big trout in free waters, and I was contented with very modest results. Yet there were men in the neighbourhood who made a living by selling the fish they caught.

I asked one of them if I might go with him. I watched him very carefully, but could not see that his methods differed greatly from my own.

As we sat down to lunch I asked him how he

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got the large baskets he did. "Weel, sir, I've a secret," he said. "What is it?" I asked persuasively. "I keep ma flee on the watter."

And after more than thirty years' experience, I can absolutely endorse this. To keep your fly on the water, and your attention on the fly is the essence of success in wet-fly fishing.

About this time I was asked to spend the night with a cousin and fish his stretch of the Tweed. It was a glorious summer evening, about seven o'clock, when I started to fish. My tackle was very second rate and I had a small landing net whose handle had been broken off about 2 feet from the net. As dusk began to fall, trout began to rise—big trout of 1 or 2 lb., or even larger.

I had never, at that time, caught a trout of over a pound, and when presently I hooked a real big one, I thrilled with excitement. It jumped, plunged, and splashed, but my tackle held, and presently it began to show signs of exhaustion. I was standing on a shelving, gravelly bank, and I thought it would be safer to draw it on to this than to try to use my small dilapidated net. I did so, but when the fish felt the ground it gave a final frantic spring and broke me. I dropped my rod, dashed forward and tried to grasp it, but too late, it wriggled into deeper water and was gone.

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Trembling with excitement and annoyance, I examined my cast. I found it in a bad tangle. Meanwhile the light was failing, and I could still see and hear the big fish flopping as they rose all over the river.

The more my shaking fingers tried to disentangle the ravel of my cast, the worse it got. Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed. The light was dimmer, the flops of rising fish grew less frequent, and my cast was in a worse mess than ever. In a sudden frenzy I tore the cast to pieces, danced on it, burst into tears, and went home.

I have often fished at night on the Tweed since then, and in many ways, to my mind, it contains the purest essence of the spirit of fishing. True, it does not require the skill needed in dry-fly fishing, or the knowledge of the habits and haunts of trout essential to successful wet-fly trout-fishing. There is not the thrill and strain in it that there is when you hook a large salmon, nor do you get the large baskets you may catch in a loch or reservoir.

On the other hand, you go down to the peaceful river when the dusk begins to fall at the end of a hot summer day. When night comes the human element is gradually eliminated from the scene, and mankind "leaves the world to darkness and to me."

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Once man leaves the scene, all Nature seems to become more intimate. Not only are the animals less shy, but the trees and shrubs begin to whisper to each other, and Nature makes you feel that you are being treated with a friendly intimacy that is always absent when mankind is about.

Unfortunately there always is a disharmony between Nature and Man, and, to my mind, the charm of such writing as Hudson's lies in the union between Man and Nature that he shows.

When the *oi πόλλοι* have gone one begins to feel oneself vibrating to one's surroundings, and the mental peace and calm they engender have the soothing efficacy of a Beethoven Sonata.

I fear all this will be caviare to the general, but I write for fishermen. They will understand.

Night fishing contains more than an adjustment of oneself to one's environment, it has thrills of its own. At first all is still. The sun has set, the river seems empty of trout. Presently, as dusk falls, a few big flies begin to float down the stream, and dimples show where the trout are sucking down their evening meal. Trout that are on the move during the night include big fish that scorn the fly during the day. The rise at dusk is generally short and sharp.

When the rise is over there is generally a pause

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until the night has come, then the big trout begin to rise quietly and steadily in the still pools, close to the edge of the river. In the dim reflected water of the departed day, you can see the rings made by big fish rising freely and persistently.

The fly they are taking is a minute midge, and I have never been able to get an artificial fly to imitate it.

By fishing dry with a sedge, you can, by persistently casting over the nose of a rising fish, occasionally tease it into taking. You need to use only a short line—little longer than your 10-foot rod. Very often the fish comes short, but when you *do* hook him the silence is broken by a loud splash, and the scream of the reel as he dashes out from the bank into the stream.

Thanks to the kindness of the late Lord Polwarth, I have fished much at Mertoun, and there was one pool I especially loved for night fishing. I fished on the right bank; behind me was a steep wooded slope, with dense under-growth extending down it; opposite it was an island covered thickly with fir-trees.

The water flowed slowly near the bank, over the flat slabs of red sandstone and gravel, from 6 inches to 3 feet in depth.

I never got a big basket, but caught many fine

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trout. Once I remember going with my friend, Edwin Bramwell.<sup>1</sup> When we arrived, the rise had not begun, but I put up my rod, and had hardly begun to fish when I hooked something big, and my 10-foot rod doubled as the reel whizzed. When the fish began to tire, I saw it was too big for my net, and finally Bramwell "tailed" it for me—a very pretty fresh run grilse of 5 lb. 2 oz.

When fishing by oneself the solitude sometimes grows eerie, and the distant noises of the river sound like the splashes of ghost horses of a body of moss-troopers fording the river on their way to carry out some foray in England.

Once, when I was fishing at my favourite spot, about midnight, I heard a loud rustling in the undergrowth close behind me. I turned round to look, and at once the noise stopped. As soon as I began fishing again, the noise began again. Suddenly there was a blood-curdling shriek close above my head. My heart literally stopped with fright as I gave a terrified glance upwards. I saw a heron which had spied me only when about to alight. The cause of the rustling I never ascertained; it was probably a fox. I decided that the trout were not taking well, and that I had better go home, so after giving one or

<sup>1</sup> Now Professor Bramwell.

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two more casts, to reassure myself that I was not fleeing because of fright, I departed.

I have had some excellent baskets of trout on the Collar Haugh, and the streams the other side of the island ; the largest brown trout I caught in this pool was 2 lb. 5 oz.

One cold April day I was fishing here with a friend. I hooked a sea-trout, and my friend, seeing I had hooked a good fish, came to land it for me. I was standing on the island and he waded in and tried to net it. Unfortunately the fish was not properly in the net and fell back into the water.

Annoyed at his failure, my friend made another dash at it with the net, fouled my dropper (I was fishing with three flies), there was a violent jar, and my cast broke.

I turned from the river, afraid to show my friend my feelings, when I heard him say, "I have still got it on."

I wheeled round, and, sure enough, I saw him playing the fish with the landing net.

In an instant I had dashed into the river to help ; the fish got between my legs, I made a wild effort to avoid fouling the line, and over I went. Luckily the water was shallow, and luckily, too, the fish was exhausted, and we finally landed it, the tail fly firmly embedded in its mouth, and

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the top dropper equally firmly fixed in the meshes of the net. It weighed  $2\frac{3}{4}$  lb.

One day, in the "Willow Bush," the pool above the Collar Haugh, I had an exciting experience. With my trout rod and flies I hooked a big and lively grilse. I was, as usual, using three flies, and hooked it on the top dropper. I tried to attract the attention of a friend who was fishing farther down the river, and finally succeeded in doing so.

Meanwhile the grilse had been putting up a great fight, but the tackle held, and when my friend arrived I gave the fish the butt. I suppose I was too strong, considering the fine tackle I was using; at any rate he broke me, and gave a flick with his tail as he departed. The flick was his undoing. He fouled my tail fly, and my reel screamed as he dashed right across the river. I thought the chance of landing him now was rather remote, but when he had taken out all my line and most of my backing, he came to the surface and lay like a log.

There was a strongish wind blowing across stream towards me. I ran back from the river, reeling up furiously as I went; my friend waded in as far as he could go, got the net over the fish's head—it was much too big for the small net—and we pulled it ashore. My fly, with broken

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gut, was in the fish's mouth, and the point of my tail fly embedded in the tail—the barb not even covered. It was a nice fish of 7 lb.

The first clean-run salmon I ever caught was at Mertoun in the Long Stream. I was fishing for trout, when the Hon. George Scott came down with a salmon rod and insisted that I should fish with it.

It was a cloudless September afternoon, and the only patch of shade was where a large tree threw its shadow over the water. Scott told me that if I hooked a fish, it would be in the shadow of the tree. He was right, and I caught a fish of  $9\frac{1}{2}$  lb. there. The bed of the stream is formed by large flat slabs of red sandstone, and there are—or were—sudden falls of level from about 2 feet deep to 6 or more. Scott was fishing down behind me with my trout rod. Having landed one salmon, I was fishing intently, when I heard a loud splash. A good fish, I thought, and looked round to speak to Scott—he had wholly disappeared. But almost at once his head emerged from the river, and he was soon on the bank, none the worse for his wetting.

It was in this pool, a number of years later, that I had a most unfortunate experience.

In September, 1911, the Tweed was lower

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than it had ever been since records were begun to be kept, about ninety years before.

I went down one day to see if I could possibly pick up a trout, and used a cast tapered to 4x gut and the smallest midge I could find in my fly-box. The day was hopeless—bright and sunny. To be accurate, I see by my record that my meagre catch was six trout and three grayling —4 lb. 9 oz. There was still a little run of water at the top of the Long Stream—too broken to make dry-fly fishing any use. I had out a long line and, instead of reeling up when walking down the river, I cast and allowed the stream to carry my fly down. My fly stopped, I struck and with a great splash a salmon leaped some feet out of the river.

To my surprise my gut held, and when, after about a quarter of an hour, I was still fast in the fish, my hopes began to rise. Then he began that horrible trick—the most alarming a hooked salmon has—of jerking. “Tug,” “Tug,” “Tug.” At the fourth tug my line came back to me devoid of fly. And now comes the maddening part. When I examined my cast, I could clearly see that the fish had not broken me, but that the knot with which I had tied on my fly had slipped. Inexcusable, I know, but that made it worse.

## CHAPTER II

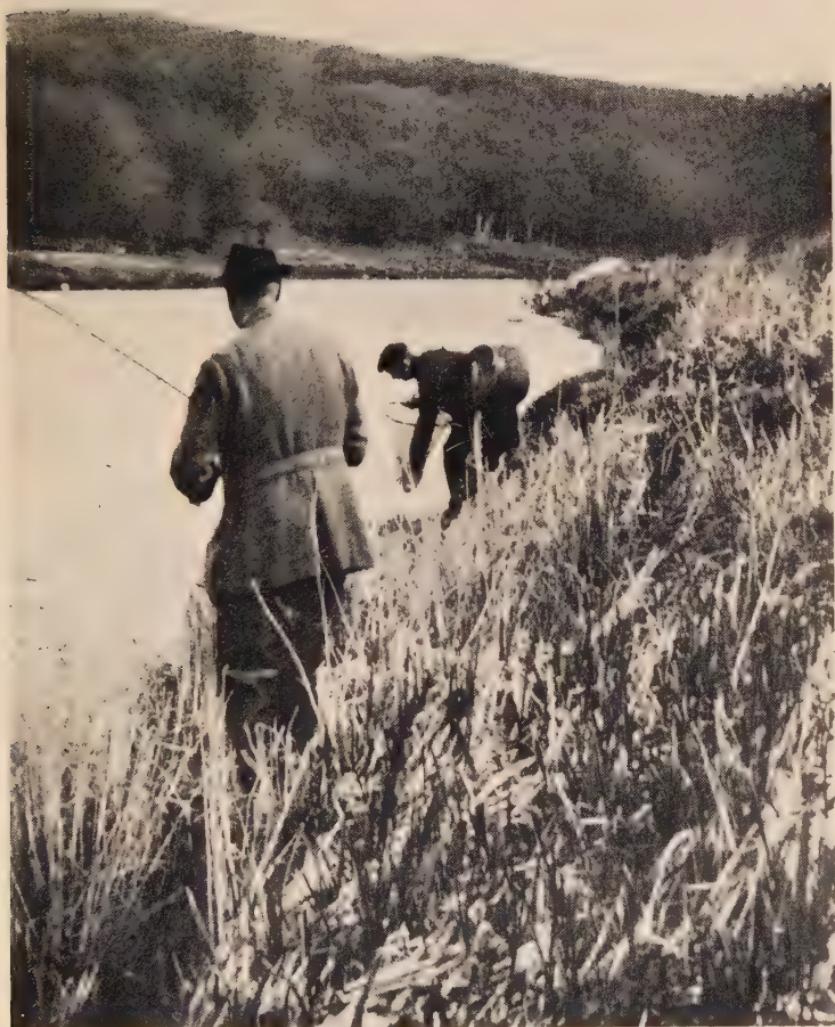
*The Don—The Forbes Arms—A hideous fish—  
The March Brown—Salmon on trout rod—  
Big baskets—The Deveron—A fishing tragedy  
—The Dee—A mixed bag.*

OF all the trout rivers in Scotland—and I have fished in most of them—I think the Don is the best. It is now twenty-two years since I first went there, and since then I have been there sixteen Aprils and know practically all the water from Cock Bridge to Kintore—a distance of over 40 miles. One charm of the river lies in the infinite variety of its streams and pools. Then the trout run big. Naturally one does not expect the fish in such a river to equal in size those of a dry-fly stream, but it is surprising to find fish of 2 or even 3 lb. far up the river where one would not expect to find anything larger than half a pound.

Another factor in its charm, to my mind, lies in the fact that the trout are difficult to catch unless you know where to fish for them. I have

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known several first-class dry-fly fishers begin full of confidence, and come back in the evening with hardly a fish. Of course if fish are rising much to the natural fly the case is different, but as a rule the rise only lasts for a short time, and for the rest of the day, unless you know where and how to fish, you will catch practically nothing. And even when you possess this knowledge you may get a very small catch. Curiously enough, it is often on the most promising days that the fish take worst, and some of my best baskets have been got during a snowstorm. When a fish is hooked he plays splendidly—a half-pounder on the Don shows more fight than a 2-pounder in a south country dry-fly stream, and when he is landed he is a joy to behold. (And equally good to eat.) Then the pleasure of fishing is increased by the charm of the surroundings. The weather can be—and often is—very cold, and icy winds or snow may daunt one and make everything seem bleak. Then the sun comes out; you come to a sheltered spot, primroses and wood-anemones cover the banks, while the delicate smell of the budding larches, the cry of the peewit and song of lark, blackbird, and thrush, and—to me—best of all the spring call of the curlew, delight the senses.



ON THE DON.

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One fascination of fishing is the uncertainty of success, and I know no river which is so uncertain as the Don. You may fish hard and well and come home with a very meagre take, whilst another rod has made a big basket not half a mile away.

The air in the Don valley is extraordinarily bracing and helps one to appreciate fully the surroundings and the sport. I have generally stayed at the Forbes Arms, Alford, and if any of my readers want an excellent holiday in April or early May, and the chance of some really good fishing, they cannot do better than write to the genial host, Charlie Spence, and try and book a room. During the War in 1917, I managed to get two weeks' fishing there. I arrived feeling tired and depressed, hardly caring even to fish. At the end of the time I felt a different man—keen, cheery, and fit. I see by my record that I fished on eleven days; some of these were spent on private water, but most of the time was spent on the hotel beats. In that time I got 170 trout, weighing 108 lb. 3 oz.

Before leaving the subject of the Forbes Arms, I must mention Mary, the shy, pretty table-maid. Always smiling, always good tempered, never seeming to hurry, and yet doing the work of at

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least three ordinary females, she is an outstanding feature in the establishment.

And the breakfasts! Real Scots porridge with creamy milk, which I prefer to eat standing on the bridge, looking at the river and watching a couple of dippers building their nest; one comes hurrying with a piece of moss, fits it carefully into the structure, flies down to the bank, washes, jumps on to a stone and makes you a little bobbing curtsy and dashes away down stream for the next piece of moss. Then I stroll into the breakfast room and have a meal of fresh trout, findon haddock, bacon, eggs, marmalade or honey. The crisp air gives one an amazing appetite, but the birds are singing outside, the car is waiting, and—I hope—the trout will be rising, so I fill my pipe, hurry into my waders and hie away to the river.

The first time I went to the Don I fished at Strathdon. The river there is a small stream, but there are quite large trout in it.

One day I hooked a big fish. Edwin Bramwell was fishing with me and came and landed it for me. When it was on the bank my face fell, for it was a hideous monster—the worst-looking fish I have ever seen come out of the Don. It ought to have weighed almost 5 lb.; it scaled exactly 2 lb. 13 oz.

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My friend saw how disappointed I was and cudgelled his brains for something nice to say about the beast. There was a long pause as we gazed at its enormous head and lengthy body, gradually tapering to a huge tail. Then "What a splendidly long fish," he said!

One cardinal rule in fishing, I think, is, when you come to a place where the trout are taking, not to leave it until you have fished it thoroughly, or the fish have stopped rising. This seems fairly obvious, and yet the rule is often broken. I remember one day I was fishing Upper Brux. I had fished for a couple of hours without a rise, when the trout began to take and I caught three in quick succession. Half a mile farther down the river there was a famous pool, noted for its big trout, and all the time I kept thinking that probably the really big fish in the pool below were rising. (One had been got there some years before of over 7 lb.) At last I could bear it no longer. I fled down the river bank in my waders, and perspiring at every pore, I began eagerly to fish the noted pool.

I was a little disappointed not to see any fly or any fish moving, but still I was full of hope and comforted myself with the thought that I was in time for all the rise. The pool is a long

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one and I fished it from top to bottom three times and never had a touch. It was long past lunch time before I was convinced that I had been an idiot and that I had missed my chance.

As a matter of fact, Fate took pity on me that day. The morning had been sunny and bright, but about three o'clock it had fallen grey and cold. It was long after the time one would expect to see any rise, and I was wandering disconsolately along the riverside when I saw a small dimple under the opposite bank. The river at this place is divided by an island, and the branch I was on had eaten deep into the clay of the opposite bank, and large slabs of grassy earth had fallen into the stream. It was in the shelter from the stream behind these slabs that the trout were rising—for I soon saw that quite a number of good trout were on the move. It was difficult to avoid the drag of the current, but I managed, with my dry-fly woodcock and hare's ear to get a basket of over 9 lb. of nice fish.

When the rise is on, it is, I think, much more fun to hook the trout with the dry fly than by fishing wet. I used formerly to waste much time and many chances by changing from wet to dry and back again. The process was often very irritating: you would see a good fish rise, would change

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your cast, and, by the time you were ready, the trout had stopped rising. After waiting for some time in vain, you would change back to wet fly, when the fish would at once rise again. I have now solved this difficulty by hiring a small boy to carry a spare rod with a dry fly all ready—Baigent woodcock and hare's ear, ginger quill, or variant. This adds greatly to one's peace of mind and comfort, for the lad can also carry the lunch, landing net and basket—till it proves too heavy.

The commonest fly on the river in April is the March Brown, but, though the trout take it, I am sure they do not really like it. The difference in the manner in which they rise to the March Brown and some of the smaller flies is very striking. They come lazily and rather bored to the former, whereas they rise sharply and keenly to the latter—for instance, the woodcock.

I had a striking illustration of this some years ago. I was fishing the Forbes Arms Hotel water at Keig, and was on one of the best stretches of the river—"below the Cobblers." There was a rise of March Brown such as I have seldom seen equalled. For about a quarter of an hour the river was literally covered with fly, and yet during that time I only saw four trout rising, then only about once in a couple of minutes.

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It seemed hopeless to compete with the myriads of natural fly floating down the stream. I tried, however, and fished with a woodcock and hare's ear, dry. It was impossible to follow one's fly once it touched the water, as I could not distinguish it from the thousands round it. I cast over the first fish I saw rising, and when my fly was somewhere near where the trout had risen, I saw a dimple, struck and hooked and landed the fish. To make a long story short, I hooked all four fish I saw rise, just as if my dry fly had no competitors for the fish's favour.

Although the trout are generally rather disdainful of the March Brown, the salmon seem to like it. Within recent years the Don has improved greatly as a salmon stream and fresh fish get up the river much earlier than they used to do. I have caught quite a number on my 10-foot rod.

After the rise is over, when the trout are not taking, it is well worth while putting on a big March Brown and fishing down a salmon "lie." Although the rod is small and the cast is "fine trout" you should fish with it just as if you were fishing with a salmon rod and fly—wading deep, casting across and down stream and "hanging" your fly as it slowly passes the spot where the salmon is likely to be. It is remarkable how quickly

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you can land a fresh-run salmon with a trout rod and tackle, provided you know how to play the fish. The great secret is to get below your fish, and so get the current of the stream to help you.

When fishing with a large salmon fly, you run a considerable risk of losing your fish if he gets above you, because the position of the fly in the fish's mouth is changed as he passes you on his way up stream. In my experience there is not this risk with a small trout fly. Once you have got below your fish, wade out from the bank as far as possible and point your rod to the side of the stream you are on. When the fish begins to tire you, reel up and gradually he comes nearer. The position of your rod has brought him closer to the bank than you are, and when he sees you he has no choice but to flee up stream, and can generally be tired out in ten minutes at the longest.

Of course it is not always possible to wade into the stream. One day I was fishing at the top of a long pool on the Don and hooked a salmon on my March Brown. The river was too deep to wade and there was a fringe of dead weeds down my side of the stream about 5 yards from the side for the next 200 yards. I had a desperately anxious time, as every time the fish came near the bank I ran the risk of one of my

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droppers fouling the reeds. My cousin, Stopford Brunton, was fishing with me, and he tried to frighten the fish away from danger by splashing his landing net in the water, but no amount of splashing would stop him and the next moment the worst had happened—one of my droppers was firmly embedded in a reed. When the fish moved out again from the bank, there was a snap and—thank Heaven—it was the gut of my dropper that broke; the fish was still on. We finally got past the danger zone, and the fish began to show signs of exhaustion, but we had no gaff and there was still the difficulty of landing him. My cousin ran some 50 yards down the river, to a part where there was a gentle stream, and rapidly built a harbour with large stones.

The mouth of the harbour was up stream, and my cousin crouched near it with a large boulder in his hand. I successfully guided the salmon into the haven and my cousin promptly dropped the boulder across the mouth and then grabbed the fish.

It weighed 10 lb. 6 oz. I see from my records that it was an hour and ten minutes after I hooked the fish before I landed it. I have rarely, if ever, taken as much as half that time to land any other fish.

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This adventure happened nineteen years ago; since then I always carry the business end of a gaff which can be screwed into the top of my landing net.

Before I learned that during a hatch of March Browns it is better, as a rule, not to use, as dry fly, an imitation of the fly on the water, my catch was often small. One day the hatch had been larger than usual and had lasted unusually long. When it was over I had only a few trout. I sat down to lunch on a fallen tree by the river bank and thought sadly of my poor take. In front of me the river ran in a broad, smooth, deep glide, not a trout broke the water and not a fly was to be seen.

I took a bite of my jam sandwich, and took the cork out of my soda-water bottle which was filled with milk. I was just going to raise the bottle to my lips when I noticed far out in the river a belated March Brown sailing down the stream. In a moment it had disappeared and a widening ring marked the spot where it had been.

I felt I must try a cast, but did not think I could reach the spot, and had so little hope of hooking the fish that I did not trouble to put down my sandwich and bottle. As luck would have it, by shooting my line, I managed to drop my fly just right the very first cast, and straight

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away the fish rose and was hooked. He made one leap, and fled down stream.

The river became more rapid farther down, my reel was screaming, my soda-water bottle had a pointed end, so that to put it down without corking it was to lose the milk, and the cork had been thrown away. What was I to do? I crammed the rest of the sandwich into my mouth, grasped the neck of the bottle with my teeth, and rushed down stream after the trout.

I do not know if any of my readers have tried to run 200 yards with a large full bottle in their teeth—it is neither easy nor pleasant. However, I landed my fish, a pretty trout of 1 lb. 14 oz., and enjoyed my lunch all the better for my adventure.

Within recent years, Dr. Baigent—one of the most skilful and successful fishers who fish the Don—has evolved several dry flies which I find most useful, and I now use them on the Don in spring almost exclusively.

In 1924 I thought I would, for once, be extravagant, and take a rod on the Dee. Along with two friends, I rented a beat for which we paid £360 for April. I sub-let the first two weeks' fishing to a friend. When I arrived I found he had not caught one single clean fish.

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After fishing for twelve days, I had landed only one salmon, and, in disgust, went off to fish for trout with my friend, Howard Bessemer, who had taken a beat on the Don.

The first day I got thirty-five trout— $21\frac{1}{4}$  lb.; the weather was cold and wet and there was an east wind.

The next day the river was flooded; the next, the river was still too large, but I got  $13\frac{3}{4}$  lb. of trout and a salmon of 7 lb. 2 oz. on my trout rod.

The following day I got 13 lb. of trout, and on the next—my last—there was a sleet and snow-storm and the river was large and discoloured and rising rapidly. I fished that day for only two and half hours, but managed to get over 6 lb. of trout, two of them 1 lb. 11 oz. each.

It is surprising that the trout could see the fly at all, but I have found in such circumstances that if you sink your fly deep enough, you may succeed in getting a few fish.

Those who believe in portents will be interested to know that the car that conveyed me from the Dee to the Don was late in arriving. I had packed all my things and whiled away half an hour getting some cards and playing patience.

I played four different games, including Canfield, the Demon, and another game which

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I had never before managed to get out. I succeeded in my first attempt with all four.

In 1925 I again fished the same stretch with Bessemer. In fifteen days I *kept* 230 trout weighing  $155\frac{1}{2}$  lb. The first three days were exceptionally good: thirty-seven trout  $18\frac{1}{2}$  lb.; twenty-nine trout  $19\frac{1}{4}$  lb.; thirty trout 22 lb. 2 oz. On the first day I had an unusual experience. I was fishing near the tail of a pool. Below me were large bushes, at the very edge of the river, whose branches hung low into the stream.

Farther down there was 100 yards of rapid broken water.

Just above the bushes I hooked a good trout. I tried to prevent him leaving the pool, but in vain, and he got into the rapids below.

Outside the bushes the water was 4 and 5 feet deep; underneath them I thought I could just manage to wade without letting the water get in over my waders.

I had to put my rod flat against the water and raise each branch I came to, bending down, so that my face almost touched the stream. Meanwhile my reel would scream, then stop, then scream again, as the trout made his way down the river.

Suddenly the note changed, and instead of an intermittent scream, there was a steady run of line.

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Through the branches I could see a hawthorn bush being washed down the river, and realized that my flies had fouled it. Luckily I had about 80 yards of backing to my line, for when I at last emerged from below the bushes the hawthorn was at least 100 yards farther down the river. I had given up all hope of my fish, but did not want to lose my line as well, and so hurried down the river bank, reeling up as I went, and giving the bush the butt in order to bring it to the bank. When I finally got it to the side some 200 yards farther down, I was amazed to see my trout just below it. I stopped my small ghillie just in time, as he was going to lift the bush out of the river. I gave him my rod, got my net under the fish, and then landed fish and bush at the same time. It was the largest trout I got that day and weighed 2 lb.

In 1925 I hooked only one salmon on the Don. I remember my boy being surprised at my being able to tell him at once that it was a "fish" I had hooked, as it did not jump or even break the water. But one can straight away make a very shrewd guess, because a trout will dash off the moment it is hooked, a salmon often sinks to the bottom and considers his plan of campaign for half a minute before he begins to fight.

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There is one way by which a salmon can always beat you if you hook him on a trout rod in a fairly broad stream, and this fish adopted it. He ran right across the river, and then jumped when close to the opposite bank. With a 10-foot rod you cannot prevent your line from being "drowned," and when the fish jumps there is no give to the line, and no trout tackle will stand the strain.

Although the salmon add to the excitement of the fishing on the Don, I am not sure that I should not prefer it if there were none in the river. They are apt to interfere with the business in hand, which is to catch trout, and after running a salmon one tends to be heavy handed and even *blasé* with the trout one hooks subsequently.

The troutng on the Don is so excellent, however, that personally I fish to catch trout as long as there seems to be a chance of success, and only try to hook a salmon when trout-fishing seems hopeless.

I cannot say the same of the Deveron, the river just north of the Don. I have fished on a good many stretches of this stream, and the trout-fishing is excellent. The fish, however, do not run so large as on the Don, and, in my experience, the salmon take the March Brown even more freely than in the latter river.

## I GO A-FISHING

In 1925 I was fishing the Eden water with Doctor and Mrs. James Collier. At the lower part of the beat, there was some shallow, fairly rapid water, and the first day I was there I saw a fresh-run salmon leap.

“It’ll just be a running fish,” said the keeper, and as he was an able man with thirty years’ experience of the river, I believed him and did not fish the place.

Next day Mrs. Collier fished this beat and got two salmon on her trout rod. Consequently, when it was next my turn to fish the beat, I fished it for salmon—using my trout rod, cast, and flies, but wading in, casting down and across stream, and working my flies. I actually hooked five salmon.

The first I landed,  $7\frac{1}{4}$  lb. The second fouled one of my droppers in some weed and broke me. The next was ready for the gaff when the fly came away. Then I got one of 8 lb., and finally hooked a big fish which ran right across the river, jumped and broke me.

I also got ten trout  $6\frac{1}{2}$  lb., but practically all of them were got on the dry fly.

I fished at Eden for a fortnight and landed seven salmon, but the river was flooded and dirty for the last week. I managed to get a fair number of trout even then.

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The method I use in such circumstances is to fish down stream, dapping my top dropper along the surface, and the trout will generally take the fly within 6 inches of the bank.

When the river is too big and dirty even for this, you may still catch trout with the fly, but it is a poor form of sport and only to be used on desperate occasions. What I do is this : if you can find a deep pool with little current, cast as long a line as you can, up and across the river. Walk a few paces down, so that your flies sink to the bottom, and then very slowly pull the line in with a slight jerking motion. No, you do *not* foul hook the trout, but they will take the fly occasionally; I see in my notes, for instance, that the last day I was at Eden the river was flooded and dirty, but that I got five good trout by this means.

On the Duff House water at the mouth of the Deveron there is excellent sea-trout fishing, but in April most of them are kelts. In 1914 I went for a week to fish the Conon with my friend Mr. James Campbell, but the river was flooded, and after waiting for four days I gave it up in despair and had two days' fishing at Duff House. On the first day I fished the lowest beat with my trout rod. I got over 15 lb. of trout, landed and returned four sea-trout kelts from 2 to 4 lb.

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each, and hooked a fresh-run salmon—unfortunately the hold gave and I lost him.

It was on the Deveron, many years before this—in 1903—that one of the tragedies of my fishing life happened. I got away from London for a hard-earned five days' salmon fishing at the beginning of October. On the first two days the river was in flood and no fishing was possible. The third day it was still too big, but I hooked—and lost—a small fish.

The next day the river was in perfect order. The other two rods got two fish each, one being 30 lb. I got only one ugly little cock fish of 6 lb. Then came the final day. I went, without any ghillie, to the top pool, which was not supposed to be good. I promptly hooked and lost a grilse.

I had scarcely begun again when I hooked one of the largest salmon I have ever seen. He sprang out of the water, and fell with such a resounding splash that the herd of cattle, feeding by the opposite bank, fled up the field. Then he dashed down stream. I was wading, some 5 yards from the bank, and turned and struggled to the side. I was carrying a gaff and it got between my legs and over I went, half in the water and half on the bank. When I picked myself up, I found my line slack, and sadly reeled up. I

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had recovered about 40 yards of line when to my astonishment and joy I found the fish was still on.

For the next half-hour I had a stern fight. At the foot of the pool, trees hung their branches into the river, which was rapid and of unknown depth. I was quivering with excitement and determined that if I had to let the fish go down I would follow him, even if it meant swimming—or drowning. Finally, however, the fish gradually worked his way up, close under my bank.

The pool was in the shape of a **V**, the apex of the **V** being up stream and right under my bank of the river.

By this time I had little more than a rod's length of line out and I kept abreast of the fish, walking along the steep heathery bank, as the great monster slowly swam up stream, nearer and nearer to the apex of the **V**, and into ever shallower water.

I was just beginning to think he would strand himself, when suddenly, for no apparent reason, the fly came away, and he quietly turned round and disappeared. I remember I fell, as if paralysed, and moaned feebly as I tore the heather up by the roots, words completely failing me.

Two years later I saw a Deveron salmon of 56 lb. on the slab of a Bond Street fishmonger. I

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thought I recognized my fish; that it was not heavier could be accounted for by its growth having been stunted by the very hard fight it had had with me.

On the Dee one can devote one's whole attention to salmon, as the trout-fishing is very poor.

One August I was grouse-shooting at Ballogie; on the days we were not driving I used to fish the river. There had been no rain for some time, the river was dead low, and my catches were very small. One day, near the end of the month, I went down to Cairnton—about the best beat on the river. It was a hot, cloudless day, and as I sallied forth, I eagerly asked the keeper what chance I had of getting a fish.

“Candidly, sir, ye hanna a ghost; we havena' got a fish this month, and this is about the worst day ye could choose.”

Nevertheless, I had a varied bag by the end of the day. I got an adder of about two feet which I saw basking in the sun. I got a rabbit that had been blinded, probably by a stoat. I recovered a prawn tackle and some 30 yards of line that some fisherman had lost. I caught a trout of about 2 oz. on my tiny Logie and with it I also hooked and landed two salmon of 7 and 18 lb.

### CHAPTER III

*The Carron—A big day on the Thurso—The Helmsdale—The value of small flies for salmon in summer—Benarmine—A blunt gaff—Another mixed bag.*

IN the spring of 1927 the salmon-fishing in Scotland was phenomenally good. I fished on the Carron for eight days at the end of April and beginning of May. The Carron is by no means the most productive river in Ross-shire and the fish are generally difficult to tempt, but I got twenty-two salmon in eight days.

By mutual arrangement between the various tenants of the fishings, no wading was allowed.

The first day, as I was walking from one pool to the next, I passed a stream where my ghillie thought I might catch a fish if I could cast far enough. For about 15 yards out from the bank, the water was not 6 inches deep, and then it deepened very gradually, so that it meant a very long cast to put one's fly over the fish.

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The wind, too, was blowing up stream and towards me. I was very doubtful about succeeding, but decided to try. To my disgust, my line caught on a barbed wire fence behind me, and I lost the only  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch Green Highlander I possessed. I hunted for it for some time, but without success.

A day or two later I was passing the stream. It did not look a very promising place and there were plenty of other streams to fish, but I was anxious to recover my Green Highlander, and it struck me that if I were to cast from the same spot I had done before, my ghillie might watch exactly where my line went behind me, and give us an accurate idea of where my lost fly would be likely to be found. This time there was no wind, and with my first cast I placed my fly well into the stream. I was just turning to ask my ghillie if he had marked where my fly went when it was behind me when my line tightened, and I was fast in a fish. I landed him, hooked and landed a second, and hooked and lost a third—but I never found my Green Highlander!

The weather, during my stay, was appalling. Although it was May, one's line froze to the rings of the rod, and the snow lay so deep near one of the pools that it was impossible to fish it.

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The largest pool in the river begins with a narrow rush between high rocks and then deepens and broadens into a large sheet of water. The top and lower part of the pool are very good, but I was told that in the middle it was extremely deep and was no use for fishing. I saw several salmon jumping in this part, and decided to try it, notwithstanding its bad reputation.

I accordingly scrambled down the almost precipitous bank, and got a precarious foothold by the edge of the stream. I rested my shoulder against a huge rock which rose some 10 feet out of the river, and effectually prevented me from going, or even seeing, down the stream. I argued to myself that if the pool was too deep for the salmon to come up to the fly, the only way would be to let the fly sink down to the salmon.

I therefore switched my fly as far across and up stream as I could, took out a cigarette and lit it, and only then slowly reeled in. In rapid succession, I hooked and landed two salmon. The second fish followed my fly, and only took it when it was close to me, and I had the satisfaction of seeing it make its final decision, and of being rewarded for not striking too soon—as every salmon fisher knows, the impulse to strike at once, when you can see a salmon take your fly into its

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mouth, is almost irresistible, and in nine cases out of ten you simply pull the fly out of the fish's mouth without hooking it, unless you can restrain yourself till it has turned.

The landing of these two salmon was very difficult, as they had to be gaffed by the ghillie at the other side of the rock where salmon and gaffer were both out of my sight.

Altogether I had a delightful holiday, and the Arctic weather added to the pleasure of coming home to a steaming bath of peaty water, a peat fire in one's bedroom, an admirable dinner, vintage wines, and excellent company.

In April, 1922, I spent a delightful ten days with Mr. Owain Greaves on the Thurso. The season was cold and the air intensely bracing.

Imagine mile upon mile of undulating heather-covered ground, and, to the East, Morven in Sutherland rising up sheer and snow-clad, exactly like Fujiyama. As we motored to the fishing the numerous grouse sat by the roadside so regardless of the car that we had to hoot to prevent them being run over—in fact, I saw the corpse of one that had evidently been so destroyed.

Greaves had one rod on the river and was generous enough to give me the lion's share of

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the fishing. We fished a different beat each day. My best day was on Loch Beg—hardly a loch, but a part of the river where it broadened out so much that a boat was necessary. I had hardly begun to fish before I hooked and landed a 20-pounder. Almost at once I was again fast in a fish. At first I thought I had hooked the record fish of the river, but soon saw that the salmon was foul hooked. He made a gallant fight, but was finally gaffed. He weighed  $23\frac{1}{2}$  lb., and was hooked in the pectoral fin. I got two more smaller fish before lunch.

As I sat by the river bank eating my lunch, Greaves took my place in the boat. I was munching my sandwiches in the shelter of a grassy bank when a golden plover alighted on the ground not more than 5 yards from where I sat. Before it had time to take stock of its surroundings, Greaves—who was some 60 yards off—had hooked a fish, and the screaming of the reel and the splashing of the salmon seemed to fascinate the bird. It was not till the fish was gaffed that it discovered me and flew away.

Later on I again took the rod. We were using two flies, as frequently the salmon seem to prefer the fly to be on the surface of the water. For over an hour I had not had a touch, when

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there was a boil at my flies, and when I struck two salmon, apparently of identical size, sprang from the water. One broke me, but I landed the other—a fish of  $15\frac{1}{2}$  lb. The old ghillie was much impressed at the unusual occurrence. He said he had never seen or heard of it happening before. "But," he said, "I have had a more extraordinary experience than that." He then told us how, one day when he was fishing, he had hooked a salmon. He knew at once, from the mad way the fish behaved, that it must be foul hooked. It finally ran right across the river and on to the stones on the opposite bank. It gave a mighty leap and got free from the hook. One more bound and it was in the river again. It dashed right across the stream and came out on the shingle by the ghillie's feet. He promptly fell on it and secured it. He found that one of its eyes was out. He could not succeed in dislodging his fly from the stones opposite and finally, in order to do so, had to cross a bridge some half a mile up the river. When he got his fly, the eye of the salmon was firmly impaled on it.

Our bag at the end of the day was ten clean fish  $117\frac{1}{2}$  lb. and a kelt. Talking of kelts, I had an annoying experience one day on the Thurso. As I was walking down the river a very pretty fresh-

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run fish of some 15 lb. rose quite close to me. There was a fringe of tall reeds between me and it, and I thought it possible it had not seen me, so I dropped my fly over its nose. I did not need to let out any line, the fish was so close—and at once there was a boil. I struck, and as the reel ran, I shouted to Greaves, "I'm into him." After the first short run the fish did nothing, I reeled up, and to my disgust brought to view an eel-like kelt of some 6 lb. It had evidently been lying beside the clean fish.

Whilst I was on the Thurso I went over to the Helmsdale and had a day and a half fishing there. I think it is the most attractive river I ever fished. There are not usually the big fish, nor is there the powerful stream, and the difficulty of following your fish that there may be in such a river as the Laerdal in Norway, and hence you may never get the thrill you get on the latter river. On the other hand, there is an infinite variety of pool and stream; the river is, to my mind, just the right size; with a decent cast you ought to be able to show your fly to every fish, while the pools are never so long as to be boring, if the fish are not taking.

Fishers on adjoining streams jeer and say there is a hut at each pool with an arm-chair and a



ON THE BLACKWATER.



## I GO A-FISHING

whisky and soda and cigars to sustain jaded anglers. This, of course, is a gross libel, but the banks are well attended to and unfair hazards such as undesirable trees, either in the water or on the bank, have been removed.

The first day my host and I had the poorest beat on the river. We each got one fish, but I hooked two more, and felt, at the end of the day, that it was due to my indifferent fishing that my bag was not much larger. The next day we had one of the best beats, but unfortunately I had to leave in the early afternoon. I got four fish; my host—a very fine fisherman—finished the day with seven.

My intense annoyance at having to stop when the fish were taking was somewhat compensated for by travelling back to the Thurso by luggage train. By paying first-class fare, and signing an agreement that you will not hold the railway company responsible for injury, this is allowed. I sat on the little outlook box in the guard's van, and had a wonderful view of the surrounding country. The motion was more like tobogganing than travelling by train. One crawled up a hill and then switchbacked down to the next valley. When I neared my station I got down from my perch and realized the railway's company

## I GO A-FISHING

wisdom in making one sign an indemnity form as I plunged head foremost over my suit-case when the train stopped with a jolt.

I think most salmon fishers fail to realize the occasional great value of very small flies in summer. True there are difficulties in their use. Your tackle must also be fine, and to use fine tackle on a big salmon rod is to court a break. With a small rod and fine tackle one feels extraordinarily helpless if one hooks a big fish in a strong river, and the odds are too heavily in favour of the fish to make it worth while. At the same time there are occasions when an otherwise blank day can be made to yield excitement, if not fish.

I can remember several examples in my own experience. For instance, one bright August day I was fishing the Blackwater in Ross-shire. The day was far spent and I had not had even a rise. We came to the best pool in that part of the river, and I fished it down very carefully without getting a rise. I changed my fly—I was using quite small salmon flies and a grilse cast—but again with a like result. I then told the keeper I would fish the pool again from the other side with my trout rod. He tried to dissuade me, and said it was useless to use any flies smaller than those I had already tried. I insisted, however, and fished

## I GO A-FISHING

the pool down with my 10-foot rod, a loch cast and a small "magenta spider." Almost at once I hooked and landed a fish of  $6\frac{3}{4}$  lb.

Another instance. I was staying with Mr. Gerard Craig Sellar at Ardtornish—a sporting paradise in Morven. His little river is called the Aline—the Gaelic for "beautiful," and well it deserves its name. It holds a large quantity of sea-trout and a fair number of salmon. I had fished all morning for salmon without a rise. Just before lunch I took my 10-foot rod with fine sea-trout cast and "The Cobb"—a fly that deserves more fame than it possesses. It is tied by Farlow and, when wet, looks exactly like a drowned blue-bottle. The size of the hook was No. 10. I promptly hooked and landed a grilse of 7 lb.

After lunch I tried a sea-trout run above the pool I had fished and again hooked and landed a grilse—this time the weight was 6 lb. I then went and fished the last remaining salmon pool with my salmon rod, but saw nothing. With my trout rod and "Cobb" I next tried the tail of the pool. When I had got almost to the final cast I thought I saw a ripple where my fly was. I asked the keeper if he noticed it, but he said no. I cast again in the same spot, and this time, as

## I GO A-FISHING

the fly came round to me, the ripple was distinct. "It must be—" I was going to say "a submerged branch," but I never finished my sentence, as my reel continued the conversation instead.

Opposite me there were alder bushes with their branches awash and their roots in the water covered with sticks and other débris carried down by the stream. Luckily, for some time, the fish kept to midstream, and it was only when a good deal of his original energy was gone that he decided to get under the bushes. For five minutes we had a stern fight. Occasionally he would gain a yard or two and gradually I would win it back.

At one time he was not more than a couple of yards from safety, but I had got below him, and with the current's help I gradually wore him out. He was a beauty—fresh run—weighing  $15\frac{1}{2}$  lb.

A few days later I went on to fish the Beauly. We fished the "Falls" and "Home" beat, and the sport was of the poorest. One day there was heavy rain, and next morning the river was big but in good order and I began the day full of hope.

The keeper knew the river well, and he advised big flies. By five o'clock I had not had a rise, my arms were aching, and hope was dead. Remembering my experience on the Aline, I told



ON THE ALINE.



## I GO A-FISHING

the keeper I was going to try a cast with my 10-foot rod. "You will never get a chance like this again for the salmon," he said. "I have had my chance and failed," I replied. "Aweel, please yerself; I'll take up the things to the hut," he said, and stalked off in high dudgeon. I used the same cast I had at Ardtornish and put on a tiny Popham, and the keeper was hardly out of sight before I was fast in a fish. The river was broad and the fish very fresh. I can well remember how helpless I felt as I watched the salmon jumping about 100 yards away, whilst I stood on the bank with the remnants of my backing whizzing from the reel.

I had no idea how deep the river was in front of me, but something had to be done, so I plunged in, and, to my delight, found I could get out about 15 yards from the bank without the water getting seriously above my waders. As luck would have it, too, the fish had run up stream, and soon I was getting back some line. Gradually I began to get more hopeful, and looked anxiously round for the keeper or some one to send for a gaff. No one appeared, however, and I was forced to try and tail the fish. The moment I attempted to do this, however, the salmon seemed to be supplied with renewed energy and

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dashed across the river. This time, too, he went down stream, and I was obliged to follow at the double. I eventually got to a point of sand below this, the river ran deep, and I could not go farther.

Just then the keeper appeared, obviously annoyed that I had hooked a fish when he was not there. "Bring him up here and I'll gaff him," he said. I pointed out that with a trout rod and fine sea-trout tackle that was impossible. "Well, ye'll lose him then," he replied hopefully. Before I could answer, a kindly providence seemed to prompt the fish to come up stream of its own accord. I let it get well above me, then put on all the strain I dared, the keeper made a skilful lunge and the fish was on the bank—a fine fish of  $17\frac{1}{2}$  lb., the sea-lice still on her.

The only other fish I got during the fortnight I was fishing the Beauly was a grilse of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  lb., which I got the following day with the same rod and tackle.

In 1927 I rented the shooting and fishing of Benarmine deer forest for August and the early days of September. The forest is about 8 miles long and 5 broad and embraces all the top waters of the Blackwater, a tributary of the Brora. From the stream stretch heather-clad moors, rising to

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the mountains on either side. A narrow road runs up the valley as far as the house, some 3 miles from the lower end of the forest.

Beyond that there are only tracks used by the ponies to bring home the stags, and, except the lodge and stalker's house, there is no human habitation. As you walk quietly round a bend of the river you may come upon a herd of deer which will stare at you for a few seconds, before they retire with their inimitably graceful swing. The grouse are calling, and you may surprise an eagle; as he rises his flight is at first ungainly, but then he spreads his wings and majestically soars away. Sparrow-hawks, kestrels and water-ousel are plentiful, and one day a kingfisher flew glitteringly past me as I was fishing.

The river itself is a small rapid stream whose bed is littered with large boulders. The water is peaty-coloured, the banks are steep, and there are few deep pools. After rain it rises rapidly and falls as quickly.

One fine day, when I was there, there was a cloudburst near the head of the valley, and the river rose more than 6 feet in ten minutes. For days afterwards the paths were littered with tiny trout that had been left as the river fell.

Although the stream is so small that usually

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you can cross it dry-shod, there are quite a number of salmon and sea-trout in it. The sea-trout run from 1 to 3 lb., and when the stream is low the only way to catch them is with the dry fly. They are shy, and the steep heathery banks and the great boulders sticking out of the water make the fishing difficult, and, therefore, very attractive. During the four weeks I was there I got ten salmon and thirty-seven sea-trout to my own rod, but of course I was shooting or fishing the lochs for a good deal of the time.

Much the largest pool was the Round Pool—a circular hole about 15 yards in diameter and very deep. I got most of my salmon here—they usually ran from 7 to 10 lb.; there was generally little current, and you could see the fish come up from the depths and take your fly—generally a tiny “Thunder.”

One afternoon the river was larger, and I hooked a salmon in a little pool about 300 yards above the round pool. He came with a nice “head and tail” rise, and I saw he was a big fish for the river. He spent a few minutes investigating all the boulders of the pool he was in, and then decided it would be wiser to go back to the round pool. As I was using a 10-foot rod and fine tackle I had little say in the matter.

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Between the two pools the stream was rapid, and I had a hectic rush, trying to avoid, with my feet, the boulders along the bank, and, with my line, the boulders in the river. The fish won the race easily, and most of my backing was gone by the time I got to the round pool, but I was only too thankful that the salmon was still on.

I expected he would be exhausted after his run, but not a bit of it! He—or to be accurate, she—sulked in the depths, and it was almost half an hour before, with my little rod bent almost double, I could raise her to within reach of the gaff.

Even then my troubles were not at an end, because at the part of the pool where the fish lay the bank was of solid rock, sloping at an angle of 45 degrees to the pool, which, even at the edge, was some 20 feet deep. I had my daughter and a ghillie with me. The ghillie knelt down and skilfully gaffed the fish at the first chance he had. I quickly handed my rod to my daughter and grasped the gaff with the struggling fish, and we all scrambled up the bank to safety. The salmon was a very pretty hen fish of 15 lb.

To give the round pool a rest, I went to a small stream below, where I got a lively sea-trout. Then I came back to the round pool and almost

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at once hooked a salmon that was a complete contrast to the last. He was a big cock fish of  $17\frac{1}{2}$  lb., played like a cod, and was soon gaffed.

I smoked a pipe and then tried the pool again, and again, almost at once, I was fast, but, alas! not fast enough, because after the salmon had made three or four violent leaps we parted company.

Always see that your gaff is sharp. One evening I was punished for not taking this obvious precaution. We had been shooting all day, and expected a friend to come in the evening. As a matter of fact he had written to postpone his arrival, but as there were only three posts a week we had not got his letter.

I walked down to the round pool, intending to get him to have a few casts on his way to the house and myself to act as his ghillie. After waiting for half an hour, I realized that he could not be coming, and began to fish the pool myself. I started with a line little longer than my 10-foot rod, and at my second cast a salmon came with a quiet head and tail rise, and as I tightened on him I had that pleasant feeling that one gets when the fish is firmly hooked. He played in the orthodox manner for a few minutes. Then he sprang high into the air, and thereafter behaved like a foul-hooked fish.

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By the time he was tired out it was getting dark, but as I knelt on the sloping rock, I could see him as I brought him up to the gaff, apparently hooked by the tail. He floated towards me on his side, and I got the gaff well under him and struck. To my horror, the steel point only scraped over his flank, but then fouled my line and broke it, and the fish was gone. Evidently when the fish jumped—and I, of course, lowered my rod point—he had got my line looped round his tail, and my gaff had broken the line between his mouth and tail.

It was almost too late to have another cast, but I was loth that my day should end in tragedy, so I hastily tied on another small Thunder, and almost at once was again fast in a fish.

By the time he was ready for the gaff it was almost dark, but I got him floating broadside to me and felt sure that even with my blunt instrument I could not fail. Alas! again the gaff did not penetrate, and the scratch seemed to galvanize the fish into fresh life. He dashed across the pool and into the rapids below. Then his strength failed him and he was washed, half out and half in the water, on to a large flat slab of rock in the middle of the stream. By the time I had splashed across to him, he had floundered back

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into the current, and was being washed down the torrent, so I had to turn, dash back again and run down the bank. Then I got him into a convenient backwater and tailed him. I was devoutly thankful that he had not broken me, and that I had not slipped and fallen in the rapid stream—I was wearing no waders.

The photograph on the opposite page shows Dr. Graham Hodgson and me after one of our days' fishing. The bag consisted of two salmon, six sea-trout, a brown trout, a weasel and a rabbit. The last two were got in the following way : As we were walking up the river we saw the dorsal fin and part of the tail of a salmon out of the water in a small and shallow pool. Dr. Graham Hodgson crawled to within casting distance of the fish, and, as he was doing this, there were squeals of distress from a rabbit on the other side of the river.

The fish came and looked at the fly, but would have none of it, and we hastened forward to see what was happening to the rabbit. When we got to the river's edge we saw the rabbit, by this time moribund, and a weasel by it. I picked up a large boulder and made the squeak of a weasel, when our friend opposite left the rabbit and stood looking at us whilst I lobbed the stone over, and, by great good luck, struck and killed it.

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The river fell so rapidly that salmon were often marooned in very small pools. One day my son Andrew and I were going to fish one of the lochs; the path ran along the river bank for some distance, and in a small pool we saw four salmon lying. Andrew asked if he might tickle them, and I said yes, providing that he did not hurt them, and put them back if he landed them. The first fish allowed himself to be scratched, but he did not seem to like it very much and eventually swam away. The second fish was lying half concealed under a boulder. Andrew tickled it for some time and then jumped up with a shout —it had bitten him! I could hardly believe it, but he told me he had put his finger into its mouth, and his finger was bleeding with the marks of the salmon's teeth on it.

I then explained to him how to tail a fish, and the third fish allowed itself to be tickled and tailed; but when it was lifted out of the water it struggled so violently that it almost pulled Andrew into the river before he relinquished his hold.

## CHAPTER IV

*Ardtornish—A beautiful river and its fish—The Shiel—Salmon and sea-trout at one cast—Salmon at an unlikely spot—Dry-fly fishing without a rod—The supernatural bell—An afternoon on the Moidart.*

A FEW pages back I told of a day's fishing I had on the Aline at Ardtornish. Some of the most delightful fishing and most comfortable holidays I have ever had have been there. The first time I went the weather was uniformly fine—a most unusual event in that part of Scotland—for the whole three weeks of my stay. I got a fair number of sea-trout and a couple of salmon, but the river was very low and it was only by very hard work, creeping, and fishing far and fine, that I could hook anything.

The night before I was due to leave the rain came at last, and I was prevailed on by Mr. Craig Sellar to stay for a couple of days longer.

Next morning the air was crisp, the glen

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fresh and green, the drops of moisture hanging on the hazel branches and grasses sparkled in the sun, and the river was "bank high," the clear brown peaty water swirling along on its way to the sea.

It was near the end of August and the big sea-trout had already gone up to Arienas—the loch farther up the glen. I used my 10-foot rod, and at once began to catch fish—sea-trout of from  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 lb. each, fresh run and game to the last. Presently I came to "George's," a pool which holds many sea-trout and a few salmon. Bushes cover the opposite bank and the water runs for a hundred yards in swirls and boils over submerged boulders as it gradually deepens and slows down to the deep still part of the pool. I had caught one or two sea-trout when, as my flies came round, a salmon came with a nice "head and tail" rise and—missed my fly. I pulled in my line, stood where I was, filled and lighted my pipe, and then cast again. This time the salmon made no mistake and was fairly hooked and duly landed. Farther up the river a grilse did exactly the same thing. I ended the day with twenty-four sea-trout  $14\frac{3}{4}$  lb., a salmon of 5 lb., and two grilse of 6 and  $5\frac{3}{4}$  lb.

The next day the river was still in perfect

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order. Almost at once I hooked and landed a grilse. Then my luck failed me. Another "fish" rose and missed me. Presently I hooked another; the hold gave way after I had had it on some time. I changed my fly, and made the mistake of getting my ghillie to tie on the new one. I promptly hooked a salmon, which went off with my fly—the knot had slipped! Almost at once I hooked another—a very big fish for the river—I had it on for some time when the cast broke at a knot—of course I ought to have tested it more thoroughly than I did, but a friend had given it to me as he said it was a specially good one. Later on I hooked still another salmon, but lost it too by the hold giving way. However I got twenty-nine sea-trout and the grilse of 6 lb.

Some years later I was again at Ardtornish. The river had an unusual number of salmon in it, but for some reason they would not rise to the fly. One night we were discussing the reason for this, and Sellar suggested it was because too many salmon were in the river and that, if they were fewer, they would rise better. I told him I thought I could easily take them out with the worm. He told me it had already been used with no success. I asked him might I try and how many might I take? "Certainly, and as

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many as you can catch," he said. The river was low and I knew that it would be no use simply dropping in a worm where the salmon lay, as they would see one and merely be frightened.

The method I used is as follows:—I procured some really large lob worms and attached two of these to a large single hook, putting the hook through the middle third of the first worm and the lower half of the second one. About a yard up I fixed a fair-sized sinker. When all was ready I went about 15 yards below where I knew the salmon were lying. I then gave the baited hook to the ghillie and made him walk down and away from the river bank for about 20 yards (pulling out line as he went). He took his stand so that I was directly between him and a spot about 5 yards above where the salmon lay. I told him to hold the bait in finger and thumb above his head and I would say "One, two, three, go!" At the word "go" he released his hold of the bait. My rod was held with the top pointing above the ghillie's head. The moment he released his hold I simply brought the rod top forward over my head and the bait dropped lightly in front of the fish.

The day after my conversation with Sellar I fished all the pools in the river with fly without

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getting a fish. I then fished with worm as described above. In about an hour I had landed six salmon, and then stopped, as it seemed too like poaching to be really enjoyable.

Of course, salmon do not always take the worm as freely as this, and I greatly doubt if it would be much use in a large river. I have never tried it; but in a small Highland stream, especially at the top of a pool, where there is a good current, there is no doubt that it is a deadly bait.

One Sunday a fellow-guest at Ardtornish and I were standing on a stone bridge spanning the Aline, and he told me that some years before when he was crossing the bridge with his small children he looked over the parapet and saw a salmon lying in the stream below. The bridge is only about 6 feet above the water, and when his children urged him to fish for the salmon he explained to them that it was no use, as it could certainly see him. They still begged him to try, so he dropped his fly over the fish's nose, and to his immense surprise, it at once rose, but in his excitement he struck too soon.

The day after I had heard this story the river was in good order, but the weather was sultry, and although I had fished hard all day, by seven o'clock in the evening I had got only five small

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sea-trout. As I was crossing the bridge on my way home, I remembered the story I had heard the previous day, and dropped my fly over the bridge directly below me. (I had already fished the pool carefully from the bank). The river was rising and was coloured, so I could not see the bottom, but at once a fish came quietly up, rose to my fly, and missed it. I stepped back, slowly filled and lighted my pipe, and then tried again. At first nothing happened, so I reeled up my line almost to the cast, and, by leaning well over the parapet, and holding my rod with its point actually under me and the bridge, I was able to "work" my fly over the spot where, presumably, the fish still lay. After doing this for about a minute, the fish again came up quietly and took my fly. From my position I could not strike, but the fish as he turned to go down hooked himself, and at once tore down the pool. It was about 9 feet from the top of the wall to the river bank, but luckily there was a deer fence at the side, down which I scrambled, and presently got on terms and eventually landed my fish—a fresh-run grilse of 7 lb.

My mind's photographic album contains some beautiful pictures taken at Ardtornish. One stands out: I was fishing in late evening for sea-

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trout—the river was very low. I heard a loud splash behind me, and on looking round, confronted a noble stag, not 10 yards from me. He was fording the river and had not seen me, apparently, till I turned. Then for some ten seconds he stood absolutely motionless, one front leg raised, in about 2 feet of water, whose ripples were crimsoned by the reflection of the dying day; the river banks were covered with hazel bushes, and behind the stag, perched on the top of a small hill, the ruins of old Kinloch Aline Castle were silhouetted black against the red and purple where the sun had set.

The sea-trout fishing on Loch Arienas was excellent and I got some very good baskets, but I am not sure that I did not enjoy more an occasional day on a little brown trout loch perched high in the mountains in the heart of the forest. The trout were small, but were really beautiful—reddy-golden and in the pink of condition.

The uncertainty of fishing was never more vividly brought home to me than on one day which I spent on this loch. As I climbed the mountains, up the steep path to the loch, the weather was oppressively sultry. Not a breath of air stirred the leaves and black thundery-

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looking clouds gathered overhead. As we reached the loch a sudden gale sprang up and the rain came down in torrents. After about half an hour the wind lessened, but for the whole time I was on the loch the rain came down heavily and one could hear thunder rumbling in the distance. Nevertheless, I see by my fishing book that I kept eighty trout weighing  $26\frac{1}{2}$  lb., the record basket for the loch.

One August I went to Loch Shiel with two friends, but we were not greatly impressed with the sport and did not stay long. Much of the fishing is done by trolling—a very poor form of fishing, I think. I was told rather an amusing story by my boatman. A certain fisher was fishing with fly on a trout rod and hooked a salmon. Presently another boat rowed past, the angler trolling a minnow. He also hooked a salmon, but it soon became apparent that he had really fouled the fly fisher's line. In due course the salmon was brought up to the troller's boat and gaffed. When the fly fisher suggested that the fish belonged to him the other replied that he would probably have lost it, and that as he had landed it he intended to keep it. The fly fisher, in a few terse words, told the other what he thought of him and they parted. In the

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evening the fly fisher arrived at the pier a few minutes before the troller. His boatman unaccountably stayed behind on the pier, and when the other boat arrived, he very politely helped the fisherman ashore, took the rod, lunch, etc., from the other boatman who was still in the boat and laid them down, then was handed the salmon and walked off with it to his master!

Although we did not care for Loch Shiel, we were attracted by the River Shiel, and the next year we took one bank for three weeks of August. Although we had no wonderful sport, we had a very jolly time and got about twenty salmon and over 200 sea-trout. I also got a brown trout of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  lb., but unfortunately hooked it on my salmon rod with a salmon fly, and so spoilt the pleasure of its capture. The river, when I fished it, was fringed with trees, some of them so placed that it was very difficult to avoid them when casting. One special offender was known as Lord ——'s fly-box, from the number of flies a certain peer of the realm had left there.

As far as I know, only one tree had been cut down; it met its fate as follows:—The late Lord Howard of Glossop, the proprietor, was fishing one day with an old ghillie as attendant. The ghillie was about seventy years old, full of wit

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and character, and excellent at his work. Lord Howard addressed some remark to the ghillie, and getting no reply turned round to find that Duncan had vanished. "Duncan," he shouted, "where are you?" "I'm up here," came the reply, from the branches of the leafy elm. "What the devil are you doing there?" "Just waiting for yer flee!" came the reply. The tree was cut down.

The first day I fished the Shiel, Duncan was my attendant. I was using only a trout rod, and in the afternoon Duncan found he had left my landing net about a quarter of a mile down the river. He went back for it and I strolled on to a large, pond-like pool, which I discovered afterwards was supposed to be no good. I was using three flies, and presently I hooked something that went off with a dash right across the river. With one rush it took out some 40 yards of line, and then, to my intense surprise, it sprang out of the stream and revealed itself as a sea-trout of about a pound. I could hardly believe that such a fish, even foul hooked, could have made such a run, but I steadily reeled in. Meanwhile Duncan had returned, and I brought the fish up to the net.

Just as he was slipping the net under the fish

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there was another shriek from my reel, and the sea-trout was dragged into the middle of the pool by—as I now realized—a large fish on my tail fly. As the big fish began to tire and I reeled up, the wretched sea-trout was suspended in mid-air and I was terrified lest he would break the line with his struggles. It did eventually break, but luckily only the line of the dropper. Finally I brought the fish up to Duncan, who got the net under it. It was too big to go into the net and fell into the water. Without a moment's hesitation Duncan fell on the top of it and emerged embracing a grilse of  $7\frac{1}{2}$  lb.

One pool in the river amounted to a small lake, and on our side of the stream there was a bay in which there was no current. A road had been cut round the side of this. On the right hand of the road rose a heathery cliff, on the left was a wall running sheer into water of some 8 feet in depth. Trees bordered the wall, and their branches dipped into the river. The water looked black and stagnant. As I was passing the place one day Duncan told me that occasionally salmon were caught there. I could not imagine a more unlikely spot. That evening I returned from fishing sooner than my friends, so strolled out to see how they had fared. I presently met

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them just at the spot I have described and found that one of them—Mr. Mayou—had got a salmon. After admiring I told him that if he dropped his fly over the wall he would get another. He thought I was making fun of him, and refused to try, so I took his rod and dropped the fly down close to the wall. At once there emerged from the deep a fish which took the fly without the slightest hesitation. The line I had out was only the length of the rod, so I had an excellent view of the whole performance. I landed him— $14\frac{1}{2}$  lb.

Whilst staying at Loch Shiel, I did a piece of mild poaching. There was no fishing on Sundays, so my friends and I strolled down the road to where a bridge spans the river just after it leaves the loch. The morning was warm and sunny, and a gentle breeze was blowing up stream. A good trout was lying above the bridge, steadily taking every fly that came over him. For some time we amused ourselves by catching blue-bottles on the bridge, dropping them down to him and watching him suck them down. Then we went back to the hotel to lunch, and after lunch took our books out, and read them as we lay on the heather. But that trout kept obtruding itself between me and my

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novel, and finally I threw down my book and announced that I was going to go and catch it. I put a reel and a tin of dry flies in my pocket, placed a dry-fly cast to soak in my case and we set forth. Instead of going by the road we walked down the side of the loch. Presently we came to a small burn, and a wild duck and her brood got up with great commotion and flew off to the loch—all except one, which with the corner of my eye I saw had gone under a small overhanging bank some 20 yards up the stream on the same side on which I was. I walked back from the burn, took off my coat and rolled up my sleeves and then stole forward. When I arrived at the spot I threw myself down and shot my arms forward over the bank, just in time to grasp the duck as it emerged. When I released it it joined the rest of the family in double-quick time.

Then we went to the bridge. The breeze was still just right for my plan, but a native was standing, apparently admiring the scenery, and I thought he would never go. However, at long last he departed and I uncoiled and straightened my cast. To one end I fixed a dry fly, and attached the other to the line on my reel. I then went to the part of the bridge farthest from the

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trout, and let out line from the reel till my fly touched the water below. Then I gathered up a few yards of line, walked across the bridge till I was above my fish, and let the line run gently through my fingers. The fly dropped lightly on the water and the fish took it at once. I played it by hand, and when it was exhausted I hand-lined it up on to the bridge. A pretty trout of about a pound and a quarter.

Few fishers, I think, realize that if you are in a position where it is essential to the landing of your trout that it be lifted out of the water, if the fish be ready for the net, and you do not jerk, it will come up like a dead herring.

Until the last evening of our stay on the Shiel the largest fish we had got was one of  $24\frac{1}{2}$  lb., got by Mr. Mayou. We stayed and were most comfortable in the house of Mr. Macintosh, Lord Howard's agent, and Macintosh had netted the fish for him. (Gaffs were not allowed.)

The last day I fished hard, but only got two small sea-trout. After supper I decided I would have a final cast and went out again with Haig, the keeper. The prospects were most unfavourable. The river had fallen low and there was a cold "haar"—wet mist. As we went to the river we met Macintosh, who cheered me by

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telling me I might as well fish on the high road as in the river for any chance I had.

I was pretty certain he was right; however, as I pointed out to him, it was now or never. I had not been fishing for five minutes when I saw something like a torpedo dash several yards across the river and seize my fly. I hooked, and eventually landed the fish. Soon afterwards Macintosh appeared and was astonished to find that I had got a salmon. He carried it home, and before long Haig and I followed him. We went to the larder and weighed my fish, and made him out to be just over  $24\frac{1}{2}$  lb. Macintosh, however, who had helped, as I told, to land the previous largest fish, would have none of this and insisted that my fish was some ounces smaller. As it was a mere matter of opinion, nothing more could be said, and so I bade goodbye to Haig and went to my room to pack.

About half an hour later I was told that Haig wanted to see me. He would not come in, and when I went to the door, he whispered, "It's all right about your salmon," and fled. Somewhat mystified, I returned to my packing. When I had finished I joined the others in the sitting-room. Presently there was a knock at the door and Macintosh entered. "Haig and I have

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been weighing your fish again," he said, "and it's rather heavier than I thought. I believe it *is* the biggest, after all."

Next morning, as I got on the little steamer which conveyed us up Loch Shiel, I got the explanation of all this in the form of a letter from Haig, which was handed me by the Captain. "I did Macintosh fine last night; I put a pound weight in your fish's stomach, and then got him to weigh it again."

Haig was a Lowland Scott, and, I think, felt rather homesick in the Highlands. He had been an underkeeper with Lord Polwarth and I had met him when shooting with the Scotts. He had no official responsibility for us, but used to like to come and ghillie for me of an evening when his work was done. One night—I remember it was a perfect evening, absolutely quiet except for the ripple of the river and occasional splash of a trout; to the west the mountains of the islands of Rum and Eigg stood black against the purple where the sun had set. We had not spoken for some time when he broke the silence by "You see some queet things in the Highlands, sir," and then told me the following story.

Before he came to Lord Howard, he had been

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keeper at a deer forest near Pitlochry. One day they were stalking and came to a corrie some 3 miles long and  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile broad. It was gently undulating. Down the centre there trickled a small burn. They espied a stag and three hinds, and after a long stalk got within shot. His master took the rifle and was just going to fire when "ting, ting, ting" went a bell. The stag departed, unshot at. They thought the noise sounded like a dinner bell and seemed to come out of the heather some few yards off. They searched for some explanation, but could find none. Next morning when Haig came to the Lodge, he was unmercifully teased by the guns. "I hear you had a fine lunch yesterday, Haig. Don't take more than one bottle of whisky with you to-day."

Three days later, the man who had teased him most went stalking and Haig accompanied him. They came to the same corrie again, saw a stag, and again got within shot. Before the rifle could be fired, again "ting, ting, ting," went the bell. "Good God! that's an old church bell," said the "gun." Again the stag departed unshot at, and again, although as Haig said they "searched high and low," they could find no explanation. The nearest human habitation was

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7 miles distant, and it was impossible for any one to lie concealed in the thin heather.

"Now, I'll tell you an interesting thing," said Haig. "The corrie is called Corrie nan Claigionn or Corrie nan Clag—either the corrie of the skull or the corrie of the bell. I've been there hundreds of times before and since, night and day, but never heard the bell except when we were going to shoot the stag."

An interesting corollary to this story was given me by a lady to whom I told it. "Did he say, ting, ting, ting?" she asked. "Yes," I said. "Then it's quite simple," she replied. "You will find that there was a church there in bygone times; you cannot kill on consecrated ground and that was the angelus they heard."

As I have lost touch with Haig and cannot remember the name of the deer forest on which these events took place, I have been unable to find out if this explanation is correct.

Whilst I was staying on the Shiel, I had a delightful afternoon's fishing on the Moidart. Kinloch Moidart is a deer forest some 6 miles away, and the previous year my friends—Mr. Mayou and Mr. Clapham—and I had gone over several times to fish some lochs there; Mr. Stewart, the proprietor, had stocked one with

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Loch Leven trout, and one day when Mayou and Clapham went there, they found the trout taking so freely that they began to be ashamed of the numbers they were catching. They spent a long time over lunch, and decided that they would not use the boat again, but fish only from the bank. Nevertheless by the time they finished—and they stopped sooner than necessary—they had got fifty-eight trout weighing 40 lb.

Mr. Stewart asked me to lunch and suggested that I should bring a rod. The Moidart is a mountain torrent that careers down the hill-side, but there are one or two pools in it and a certain number of grilse go up it. During the night before my luncheon with Mr. Stewart, there had been heavy rain, and consequently I took a 12-foot rod and some small salmon flies.

As we were seated at an excellent luncheon, my host asked me if I was prepared to go and catch some trout on his loch. "What about the river?" I asked. "Oh, it is much too big at present, we might have a cast on the way home." As the hour was then about 2.30, the walk to the loch some 3 miles, and a car was coming for me at 7 p.m., I thought there would be very little time. When I told Stewart this, he said of course I could please myself, but that

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he did not think there was much chance in the river for some hours. I confessed that I would prefer to take my chance on the river, and so it was decided.

It was arranged that we would walk up to the top of the stream and fish our way down. Our path ran along the stream, and as we followed it, Stewart pointed to a part of the flood and told me that when the river was in order, it was then the best pool. I looked, and remarked that there was about a couple of yards at the tail of the pool that seemed possibly fishable, although even there the water was still too rapid. He suggested I should try a cast; I did so and at once hooked a grilse. It got into the rapids below and I had to run down the side of the stream, Stewart and his keeper racing on ahead on the chance of being able to reach the fish with the gaff.

This they eventually did. Some distance farther up we came to a quieter pool; I rose one fish and another one followed my fly, but would not take it. Stewart meanwhile had gone on to fish some pools higher up.

As I was walking up the stream to rejoin my host, the keeper said, "There's a little hole opposite here that sometimes has a fish in it."

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I tried it, hooked and landed a grilse. "Any chance of another?" I asked. "You can never tell." So I tried again and again got a fish. For some time after this my luck deserted me, but just before my car arrived I got a fourth grilse. They weighed 5,  $5\frac{1}{4}$   $5\frac{3}{4}$ , and 7 lb.

The Moidart flows into the sea only about a mile from the Shiel, and I was told that the fish occasionally go up the wrong river. The Shiel is a placid stream, and the Shiel salmon is a picture of all a salmon should be—small head, deep body, and, in fact, in the pink of condition. The Moidart fish, on the contrary, looks at first sight, especially when comparing it with a Shiel salmon, almost like a kelt. But when you examine it more closely, you see that the body is all solid muscle, without any spare fat.

One day on the Shiel I caught a salmon that was obviously a Moidart one. I can quite understand that the fat Shiel fish could never win up the Moidart rapids, but it is difficult to understand why the years the fish have lived presumably similar lives at sea should not have made them at least a little more similar. Is the Moidart fish, as he comes from the sea, wiry and muscular from heredity, or from his hard life as a smolt?

## CHAPTER V

*Loch fishing in Scotland—Shetland—Snipe-shooting in a bog—North Uist—A good day with the sea-trout—Seals—South Uist—Howmore river—A big sea-trout—Loch Stilligarry—Wild geese.*

I HAVE fished in many lochs in Scotland, and had some very pleasant days on them, but I do not think that loch fishing can compare with river fishing as a sport. At the same time there is much more skill needed to make the best of one's chances than many fishermen imagine.

One obvious fault is made, in my experience, by most of those with whom I have fished—they cast each time in practically the same direction, and consequently about two-thirds of the time they are covering water which they have already fished.

When there is a moderate breeze, and the boat is drifting quietly, I place each cast a yard or two to the right of the preceding one till—

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if I am the only fisher in the boat—I have fished the whole semicircle of the boat, and then begin at the other side again. Of course, if there is another fisher in the boat, I only fish a quarter of the circle.

Then on some days the trout will take the fly best when sunk and moving slowly, at others it is most deadly to bring the top dropper up till it daps along the surface of the water. Very often, too, the trout take best when the flies are brought across the wave. This is obviously to be expected, because if the trout are on the look-out for fly, they will be facing to windward, and if you cast down wind, the fly will be seen by fewer fish.

By always changing the angle at which you cast and by attending closely to the depth and speed at which you move your fly, you will be more alert and less likely to fail to hook the trout when they rise. Always make each cast as if you fully expected a rise. How often I have seen the casting become mechanical, and the attention of the angler wander, so that he either completely fails to see the rise to his fly, or becomes aware of it when the trout has gone on its way rejoicing.

Loch Leven is, I think, the most productive

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sheet of water in the British Isles. It is quite amazing how the large fleet of boats go out every day and bring back trout—sometimes enormous catches of them. You can drift down some 50 yards behind another boat and yet catch fish as well as if they had seen no lure for days. The scenery is peaceful and at times beautiful, and the trout are amazingly strong, but there is far too much of the element of competition in the fishing to make it attractive to me.

I remember I was once fishing there for a day on my way south. I had no companion, but took a spare rod with me in case of accidents. One of my boatmen—you must have two—was proceeding to put up my spare rod, and when I told him it was only to be used if any ill fate befel the other, he said, “But am I not to fish?” When I said “No,” he replied, “Ha! a very poor show *our* boat will have to-day when it comes to the weighing”—and both men sulked for the rest of the day.

Although I think that competition with other anglers spoils the true spirit of fishing, I confess I have fallen and fished to get the “biggest basket.” The occasion was this:—A number of years ago I spent a couple of days at Melvich in Sutherland. When I arrived in the evening

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at the hotel, a very superior young man, who was one of the fishers staying at the inn, proceeded to tell me how to fish. When I mildly questioned some of his axioms, he pooh-poohed me and let me understand that I was entirely ignorant and that no doubt he was the person and wisdom would die with him.

Next day I had a nice day's fishing and got seventeen trout 10 lb. 2 oz. It was the largest basket brought in that day to the inn, and my mentor of the previous evening had got practically nothing. He explained that the loch I had fished was suitable for beginners, as the trout took so freely, whereas the loch he had been fishing was extremely difficult. I determined to go to it next day and did so, the superior young man going to the loch I had fished the day before.

When I arrived at the loch—na Haglach mohr—there was practically no breeze, but an occasional trout could be seen rising. I had an excellent boatman who brought me quickly and quietly within reach of any rising trout, and I got twenty-five trout = 13 lb. 2 oz.—more than all the other rods at the hotel combined.

I had been fishing in the wrong spirit, and felt almost guilty, but this did not prevent me

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from having a malicious pleasure in watching the superior young man's face when my basket was emptied, and seeing his vain efforts to find some excuse for his own failure.

It is curious how enormously the size of the trout varies in different parts of Scotland, and even in lochs quite close together. I have fished in lochs in Argyllshire where five trout to the pound was a very good average, lochs in Sutherland where the fish averaged almost a pound, lochs in Outer Hebrides where they run to 4 lb., and Lochs Dupplin and Coldingham where trout up to 10 lb., or even larger, have been caught.

In the last-named loch I had a curious experience. I had arranged to meet my host there one evening. I was staying some 2 miles away, and arrived at the side of the loch about ten minutes too early. I put up my rod and fixed my cast. In order to soak it I cast it into the loch, and at once to my surprise a trout rose. I struck, and the dry gut snapped and I lost practically my entire cast.

Ten days later, after I had left the district, I got a letter from my host, enclosing my cast. He said two friends of his were trolling and he rowed out to see what sport they had had. "As

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I pulled away, I said, 'Well look out for a trout with a fly in its mouth,' and in five minutes they were fast and played a fish. I rowed up to see the fun. The minnow was about a foot outside the trout's mouth entangled in a piece of gut, herewith sent, which held the trout by the fly. Curiously too, I knew of no fly being lost. You may have told me of losing a fish" (I had), "but I do not remember your telling me, and had no fly in my mind that I was aware of when I spoke."

I hooked only one really very big fish on Coldingham loch. My brother-in-law was alone in one boat, I in another with a girl at the oars. It had been a perfect summer day, the sun had set and we sat quietly waiting for the evening rise. Presently my companion saw a good rise close to my brother-in-law's boat and told me of it. As she spoke I saw a very big trout quietly take a fly close to me. I foolishly said nothing, but dropped my fly over the fish; the first my companion knew of it was when the fish went off with the rush of a salmon. "Back water," I screamed as I saw the remains of my line whizzing from my reel. She plunged the oars into the loch and—pulled! I slowly and sadly reeled in, and she was so distressed that I said never a word.

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Some thirty years ago I used to go up to Walls in Shetland to fish and was there on three successive years. The fishing was free, we had most comfortable rooms, a bathroom, four-course dinner, excellent breakfast, and our bill—with no extras—for food and accommodation was 25s. a week each!

The fishing was not exceptionally good, but it might have been much worse. We got brown trout up to 2 lb. 14 oz. and sea-trout to nearly 4 lb. The latter were caught chiefly in the "Voes"—really inlets of the sea, with salt water, and tidal, but so surrounded by land as to look like fresh-water lochs. The sea-trout used to lie near the mouth of the burns, waiting for a flood to allow them to ascend.

One day—we were a party of four—we were in two boats on the Voe. It was a cloudless afternoon and hardly a ripple stirred the surface of the water. To fish seemed hopeless and we sat smoking and dozing in our boats. Presently I saw a sea-trout jump some 300 yards away, at a place where there was no burn, and where we never fished. We rowed down and anchored our boat by dropping over the side a large stone fastened to a rope. We at once began rising and hooking trout. When the men in the other

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boat saw this they came and anchored close to us, but although we continued to catch fish they could get nothing. I see from my notes that we actually got twenty good sea-trout whilst they got only two.

Some days later when the tide was out, I rowed down to see if I could find some explanation for this. I discovered that we had anchored over a narrow strip of sand, whilst all around us was a tall forest of seaweed, and the fish had all collected on the sandy strip.

It was near here that one day—I was using three flies—I hooked a sea-trout of about 1 lb. It weeded me, so I put down my rod, grasped my line and my friend rowed the boat up to the spot. With gentle pressure the fish came from the weed and was duly landed. It had taken the tail fly. On the middle fly was a small haddock of about  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. and on the top dropper an immature lythe of about 2 oz.

Plunket Greene, in that excellent book of his *Where Bright Waters Meet*, tells how I got a plaice on a trout fly. The incident happened the first time I was in Shetland and I had only one companion. We had finished fishing for the day, and were sitting outside the house after an excellent dinner, smoking our pipes. The

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light was fading, when we saw a large sea-trout jump in the Voe. We had never fished in this particular Voe and were unaware of any sea-trout being in it, so we at once got our rods and waded out—we scorned waders—and began to fish. After about ten minutes without a rise, I tired of it and stopped. As I was wading ashore my friend's flies fouled a piece of seaweed and by jerking his rod, so that the reel screamed, he tried to make me think he had hooked a fish. As he did so there was a great splash, and his line began to sail slowly out. From the size of the splash we concluded he must have hooked a very big sea-trout, and yet it would not take out any line, but contented itself by swimming round and round and occasionally splashing. By this time it was too dark to see the fish, but I eventually got my net under it. I well remember our intense disappointment when we found it was a plaice weighing 2 lb.

One time I was in Shetland near the end of September, and we took our guns and shot some snipe and wild duck. We were told of a bog some 5 miles away where there were said to be a great many snipe; so one morning we went to it. We had a walk of about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles, then were ferried over a voe, and then had another

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walk of about 3 miles. The bog was about half a mile long and 200 yards broad; all round it were cultivated patches on which the inhabitants of some twenty cottages were busy digging up potatoes. Although the place must be one of the most remote in the British Isles apparently it had been shot over before, because the head man of the village produced a piece of rope about 200 yards long from which, every 10 yards or so, hung a short string attached to a small tin can in which was a pebble. Two lads were provided each with an end of the string, and they walked slowly up either side of the bog, the rattling stones in the tin cans successfully flushing the birds. The shooting was distinctly difficult, because before firing one had to be quite sure one would not bag a native as well as a snipe.

We got a fair number of snipe, however. I shot one that dropped at the edge of the bog. It was only winged and began to flutter back into the bog, so I ran forward to retrieve it; suddenly I went right through the surface up to my middle.

Although it is thirty years ago, I can still hear the roars of laughter from the natives. But to me it was no laughing matter. I know

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of no more uncomfortable sensation than to feel yourself slowly sinking into unplumbed depths of mud, whilst the bright green of the treacherous surface sways up and down. As far as I was able I lay back, the while I took the cartridges from my gun. Then one of my friends grasped the barrels whilst I hung on to the stock. At first it seemed as if he, too, would sink through. But I felt I was no longer sinking, and, finally a couple of natives grasped my friend and amongst them they hauled me to safety.

The scenery of Shetland consists almost entirely of peat bogs, rock, and innumerable sheets of water, fresh or salt. The absence of trees and the clear atmosphere make it very difficult to estimate distance. The first time I was there I was fishing a loch. At one side was what I thought was a range of fairly high hills, some miles distant. Presently a raven flew overhead; I watched it, and to my great surprise it alighted on the hills, which were really a small range of hillocks not 300 yards distant from me.

No part of the island is more than 5 miles from the sea, and even on the quietest day you can hear the distant "boom" of the Atlantic breakers on the cliffs. The sea fishing is, I

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believe, very good. One day some of our party tried it and brought back a large sackload of various fish; personally I never tried it.

The scenery in the outer Hebrides is not unlike that of Shetland, but the hills are higher and there is more heather, and in one or two sheltered spots you may find a few stunted trees. I have twice stayed at Loch Maddy in North Uist.

If you stay at the hotel—as I did—you have the run of a large number of lochs. The fish vary remarkably in size in the different lochs. Thus in one, I see I got sixty-three trout 15 lb., in another thirty-three trout  $13\frac{1}{2}$  lb., whilst in a third I got six trout  $7\frac{1}{2}$  lb.

I was at Loch Maddy both times in August, and both times there had been practically no rain for some weeks, and the sea-trout could not get up to the fresh water.

The best sport I had was fishing the Gerinn Mill Sea Pools. The best time to fish them is from three hours before, to three hours after, low tide. Suppose that you arrive four hours before low tide you find an estuary of the sea, some half a mile broad by about 2 miles long. As the tide recedes the estuary rapidly contracts and becomes a river with pools and rapids. When the

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tide is fully out there remain only pools, isolated from each other. One pool is larger and deeper than the others, and at the seaward end, as the tide goes out, there is a rushing torrent, boiling over seaweed-clad boulders. I found the sea-trout took more freely there than anywhere else, but the majority went down the rapid and in most cases I got broken by the line fouling the boulders.

When the tide is fully out, many sea-trout remain in the pools, some of which are so shallow that one would never suspect them of harbouring big fish. I had several really excellent days' fishing here. On my best day I got eleven sea-trout 25 lb. 14 oz.

When the tide was fully out I was passing a pool, some 30 yards broad and about 100 yards long. The bottom was fine sand, and the pool nowhere more than 3 feet deep. I never thought that any sea-trout would have remained in such shallow water, but I had been fishing a deeper pool above, and to save the trouble of reeling in, cast my flies into the pool as I walked down it, intending to fish farther down. To my surprise, as I drew in my line, I saw several large sea-trout following my fly (a silver body and teal wing). They were slow about making up their

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minds to take the lure, and it was only when I gradually pulled in my line, till there was not more than 5 yards out, that one took the plunge.

Sea-trout are always sporting, but the sea-trout that is still in salt water is especially so. This fish proved no exception to the rule and was oftener out of the water than in it, so when I eventually landed him (he weighed 3 lb. 12 oz.), I expected that it would have effectually frightened the other fish. I tried again, however, and promptly hooked and landed another of 4 lb., and immediately afterwards got a third of 5 lb.

Before I came to this pool, I had lost two good fish, but I see from my notes that "afterwards was very lucky—lost none, and twice on landing fish (including 5-pounder) found fly lying loose in mouth."

When I was at Loch Maddy I had never used dry fly for sea-trout. Since then I have got many in Norway, and I think that it would prove deadly in the sea pools, whilst they are still a river. In a river the sea-trout is, I think, the shyest of fish, but I believe that this shyness is acquired only after leaving the sea. The sea-trout whose capture I have just described must have seen me, and yet they showed no alarm.

On another day at Gerinn Mill, I saw a sea-

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trout jump in a small round pool some 15 yards in diameter. I crawled up to the pool, cast, and promptly hooked a fish. It weeded me some 3 yards from the side, so I waded out and managed to land it. Whilst I was shoving the fish into my basket—still standing in the pool—another sea-trout jumped close to me. I cast over it, hooked and landed it, and yet I had out little more than a rod's length of line. Another instance, to show that probably the shyness of sea-trout is acquired in the fresh water:—At Ardtornish, of which I have previously written, when the river was very low one had to creep and crawl, and use a very long line in order to get any fish. If one did hook a sea-trout, it was useless to fish the same pool again for some time.

Yet, one day, I was fishing at the foot of the river. The stream was divided there, when the tide was out—as it was when I was fishing—by a small island on which was a large boulder, big enough to screen me whilst I waded to it and cast into the tiny pool at the other side. I did this, and hooked a sea-trout of about 1 lb. I emerged from behind the boulder and netted the fish. Then I sat down, filled and lighted my pipe, and as I did so looked at the sea-trout still in the pool. There were eight of them,

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and I was surprised to see that they did not seem to be alarmed although I was sitting in full view, not 6 yards distant.

With more curiosity than hope, I dropped my fly over them, and immediately hooked one. I actually landed three of them before the remainder stopped rising.

On the islands on many of the lochs in North Uist are the ruins of old castles, or, as they were called—Dunes. Generally there is a narrow path between the island and shore, just covered by water, and much shallower than the surrounding loch which may be 8 or 10 feet deep. Some of the original stones on these paths are known as “clattering stones”—so named because they were so placed that when any one stepped on them they rocked slightly and hit the stones below, consequently making a clattering noise and warning the inhabitants of the dune of the approach of a possible enemy.

The largest dune on the island is Dune Torquil on Loch an Dune. Torquil was one of the two sons of Leod, the founder of the clan of M’Leod. One of the stones on the path from the mainland still clatters loudly if one steps on it.

The trout in Loch an Dune run big—much larger than in any of the lochs in the neighbour-

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hood, and the ghillies say the largest are to be found round the ruins of the castle.

One day I was fishing here, and caught a sea-trout. I did not know that sea-trout could enter the loch, and questioned my ghillie. He told me that there was a small stream of about 100 yards long between the loch and the salt water. He also told me that, as far as he knew, no one had ever fished for sea-trout at the outlet of the stream into the sea.

I made him row me to where the burn left the loch. The weather was dry, and the stream a mere trickle. We grounded the boat and I walked down to the salt water full of hope, visualizing masses of sea-trout waiting for a chance to run up the burn, and meanwhile, eager to seize my fly. The salt-water loch, where the stream entered it, was a narrow bay with a sharp bend some 50 yards away. I fished this part without getting a rise.

When I reached the bend—a high heather headland hid the view of the rest of the loch till one got there—my ghillie gave a shout of surprise. I looked up and saw a small island some 30 yards distant simply covered with seals. They were already slipping and jumping into the sea, and presently were all in the water, their heads dotting

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the sea all round, as they watched us. I counted over fifty, but probably there were almost twice as many. I was not surprised that sea-trout had not been in evidence.

One autumn, with five other men, I rented Grogary, in South Uist. We had about 60,000 acres of rough shooting and innumerable lochans and lochs, including the famous Howmore River, possibly the finest sea-trout fishing in the British Isles. The Howmore River is really two lochs—Fada and Roag—separated by a narrow, canal-like stretch of water about half a mile long, and with a tidal river of about half a mile between Roag and the sea.

Much the best fishing is the two lochs. Unfortunately the season when we were there was a particularly bad one for sea-trout, but we had what on other lochs would have been considered excellent sport.

One day, as I was drifting down Roag, I saw a very big fish leap from the water some 50 yards ahead. It was by no means a taking “rise,” and I was very agreeably surprised when I got to the spot to see the fish come with a beautiful “head and tail” boil, and to find him firmly hooked. I had a mere lad to ghillie for me that day, there was a strong breeze and the



HOWMORE RIVER, SOUTH UIST.



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fish was remarkably agile for his size. Once he got into some weeds and I thought he was gone, but my luck and tackle held, and eventually we landed him—11 lb. 4 oz. This is the largest sea-trout I have ever got in this country.

Roag is a more or less circular sheet of water; Fada, on the other hand, is long and narrow, with many bays. Neither is large. I used frequently to fish from the shore in preference to being rowed in a boat. In fishing from the bank one could cover, of course, only a limited amount of water, and always ran the risk of hooking a big fish that might take out all one's line and so escape; but the fish very often missed the fly the first time, and when fishing from the bank one could give it a rest and try again. Though I hooked several big sea-trout fishing from the bank, and occasionally feared all my line would be taken out, and I be helpless to follow, this never happened.

The land to the west side of South Uist is low, and one is exposed to the full force of winds from the Atlantic. As a result, the weather is extraordinarily—I cannot think of a better word—immoderate. For example, one day another member of our party and I were going to fish Fada. We got into the boat, but after half an

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hour's strenuous rowing we had only got about a quarter of a mile up the loch. I therefore landed at a comparatively sheltered bay, and left my friend and the ghillie to struggle up the loch. Even in the bay which I fished it was much too rough for successful fishing, but I managed to hook and land a fish of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  lb.

Presently my friend came drifting down, the ghillie pulling hard at the oars to try and make fishing possible. We decided to lunch, which we did in some discomfort, trying to find shelter behind a peat "hag." Then came the question of lighting our pipes. We filled them, lay flat down behind the hag, pulled a mackintosh over our heads and eventually succeeded.

When we removed the mackintosh the wind was abating, so we walked to the boat, some 20 yards away, and pushed off: by the time we were ready to cast it was dead calm.—A tall story, I grant, but my friend who was with me, Mr. Lockhart-Mummery, corroborates it.

In all of the many lochs are brown trout. In most of them the fish run small, but there are exceptions. The best brown trout loch I have ever fished is one of these—Loch Stilligarry. It is a small loch, much of it unfishable because of weed. It is dotted all over with tiny islands,

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and there are several shallows about 10 yards broad, where the water is not more than a foot deep. A tiny trickle drains from it to the next loch—Loch Grogary—and the actual exit into the sea must be over 2 miles distant. Nevertheless not more than a few hundred yards of low sand dunes lie between it and the Atlantic.

No sea-trout can enter the loch, but I think the fish must be descended—as Loch Leven trout probably are—from landlocked sea-trout. They are bright and silvery and leap from the water, when hooked, much oftener than does the ordinary brown trout. Much the most taking fly was the “M’Ginty”—a most life-like imitation of the wild bee (Carter, South Molton Street, London). We used it as top dropper, and dapped it along the surface. It had its drawbacks, because, although the trout were very partial to it, they were evidently rather afraid of it, and would follow till the fly was almost up to the boat and then take it with a quick sharp snap—like a dog killing a wasp. The result was that the breakage of rod tops was enormous. It is almost impossible to avoid occasionally snapping your top, when, with your rod perpendicularly above you and your fly close to the boat, a big fish comes with the rapid snap I have

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described. I actually broke two tops in one day, and rather spoilt an especially good day's sport in consequence.

On this day the fish were coming particularly shyly and generally missed the fly or just touched it. I see from my notes that I counted the rises I had—I got eighty-six, but landed only sixteen trout = 16 lb. My best day on this loch was eighteen trout  $26\frac{1}{2}$  lb. (3 lb.  $2\frac{3}{4}$ , etc.).

I remember fishing one tiny bay with exceptional care because the head keeper told me that Lord Grey of Fallodon had hooked and lost a very big fish there. I felt it would be an honour to be connected with that peerless sportsman, even by a trout, but this honour I failed to obtain, and so have to content myself with a common ancestor some 300 years ago.

We had a couple of Fords to take us to the various lochs, and always carried a gun or rook rifle, generally bringing back a few snipe and an occasional wild duck. Later in the year great flocks of wild geese come to the island, and even in August there are some native Grey Lags.

One day I spoilt my friends' sport in a most unfortunate manner. Four of us were motoring to the fishing, when we were stopped by an under keeper who told us that six wild geese were

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teeding not 200 yards away, beyond a slight rise in the ground.

Two of the party had rifles, so it was arranged that they should stalk the birds, whilst the other man and I, who had shot guns, would hide some distance down the road on the chance of the geese flying over us. After sitting in the ditch by the road for some time I saw six geese fly away. Apparently they were the ones that the keeper had seen. They came nowhere near me, but a wild duck that had got up at the same time flew past me about 50 yards away. In my left barrel I had a cartridge with No. 1 shot and fired this at it. I missed—or at any rate did not bring it down,—but at the noise of my shot some fifty geese arose with a great guggling. It turned out that my friends, after a long and difficult stalk, had at last managed to get within range, and were practically on the point of firing when my shot frightened the birds. To aggravate my offence, the geese came over me. They were rather high, but I managed to bag one.

Another day, when we came out of the house to go to the fishing, we were told that some geese were feeding on the shores of Loch Grogary, about half a mile from the house. The keeper told us that if they were disturbed they would

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probably fly down the loch and down the small stream that emerged from it. Consequently three of us went to a stone bridge at the foot of the loch, and two keepers were sent to flush the birds.

We tossed for positions and I got the centre one, and stood in the water just behind the bridge which screened me from the birds coming down the loch. The other two men hid as best they could, one at either side of the bridge. It was a very hot day, and I crouched under cover of the bridge, a cloud of flies tormenting me. I quickly forgot about flies, however, when I saw the geese get up. They were about three-quarters of a mile away, and at first it was difficult to tell if they were coming right. But it was not long before I could see that they were coming straight down the loch.

I had never shot a goose before. I was almost too long in standing up and shooting. Bang went my first barrel. I saw I had killed, and swung round to get my second, but just as I was going to fire, I saw goose No. 1 hurtling at my head. I fired—clean missed! ducked at the same moment, and just escaped being knocked over by the bird I had shot. One of the other guns brought down a second bird.

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One evening, as we were motoring back from fishing, we saw ahead of us some geese flying in a direction that meant, if they did not change their course, that they would cross the road about a quarter of a mile in front and we loaded our rifles. We got to the place where the birds would have crossed the road just as they came up to it. We fired and they slewed round, and for about half a mile flew parallel with the road. There were about a dozen of them, and they were not more than 50 yards distant; but though they are large birds, it is more difficult than it appears to hit even a large target with a rook rifle when your car is going 40 miles an hour over a bumpy road. For the whole half-mile we loaded and fired and loaded again as fast as we could, but we never even touched a feather.

## CHAPTER VI

*Dry fly in England—A day's dry fly on a tiny stream—Mimram and Lee—Snaring pike—How I lost a big fish—A war-time nightmare.*

I HAVE fished on most of the best dry-fly streams in England, and I think that shooting driven pheasants differs from rough shooting in much the same way that dry-fly fishing on a chalk stream differs from wet-fly fishing in a Scottish river.

Great proficiency in pheasant driving and dry-fly fishing demands the greater manual dexterity; but in rough shooting and wet-fly fishing the qualities of a sportsman are far more requisite. Moreover there is too often over much artificiality in dry-fly fishing—just as in pheasant shooting.

It was for this reason that once when walking with Plunket Greene I guddled a trout—an incident he mentions in *Where Bright Waters Meet*. As we were walking up the Bourne one Sunday, chiefly to see a large trout that lay in a

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broad shallow stretch near the top of the fishing, he asked me what I meant by saying dry-fly fishing was too artificial. I replied that for one thing, if the trout refused to take your fly in a small stream like the Bourne, you could lift them out with your hands. He obviously did not believe me.

We were walking up the river as we were talking and I had seen a fish take shelter under the bank. I offered to prove to him I was right, so took off my coat, rolled up my sleeves, lay down on the bank, tickled the trout and lifted it ashore.

When we arrived at the spot where the big trout was lying, we admired it, and Greene said, "Well, you could not get that fish anyway." I told him I could. The fish was lying in the centre of a shallow pool, some 20 or 25 yards broad. At the foot the pool contracted, and there was below it a fairly rapid run not 4 yards across. I walked above the fish, threw in some small stones higher up the pool and frightened it down to the tail and into the narrow run below. I then ran after it, splashing the water behind it with my stick. Now fish cannot breathe unless they turn head up to the stream, and if they are prevented from doing this they soon become sick and will actually turn belly up. Conse-

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quently my trout presently ignored my splashing, turned up stream and buried his head in some weed. I had no difficulty in lifting him out.

There are times when it is useful to remember that trout cannot breathe properly when going down stream. I can remember several times when I have hooked a good fish which took me down the river, and wherever I have been able to keep abreast of the fish, I would not allow it to turn head up stream, but pulled it down, with the aid of the stream, to a convenient place for netting, when I could pull it into the net like a dead cod.

The lofty air of superiority assumed by most dry-fly purists accounts for the plea I have just made for the greater art of wet-fly fishing over dry: it does not mean that I am not myself devoted to the dry fly, and to use a wet fly in a chalk stream is as wrong, I think, as to fish a good Scots river, when flooded, with the worm —although I confess that in my younger days I have done this. But then, in the chalk stream, you can see the trout, and need no skill to know where and in what mood they are.

I think it adds to the joy of fishing to go to it from a large town. I myself go from the smoke and grime of London, from sweltering humanity with all its fitful fevers. I am whirled to some clear

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quiet river rippling over its chalk bottom with patches of weeds swaying in the stream. Swallows and swifts skim over its surface, and water voles are busy on the banks. All around are the lush water meadows, dotted with cowslips, marsh-marigolds and innumerable other flowers, and the air is heavy with their scent. Thrushes and blackbirds sing to you, whilst from time to time, you hear the cuckoo's call.

As to enjoy a good drink you must be thirsty, so to feel the beauty of such surroundings to the full, you must have been cooped up with humanity for some months. One feels as a traveller must, who finds an oasis when dying of thirst in the desert.

My favourite county for dry-fly fishing in England is, I think, Wiltshire. It is more truly rural than parts nearer London, and the fishing is generally more natural there.

In connection with highly artificial and closely guarded streams I was told a tale which, I fear, is too good to be true. The angler said that one day he had already captured his limit when he hooked a nice trout. Not wishing to hurt him, he adopted the excellent method of playing the trout till it was exhausted, and then running his finger and thumb down the line till they

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grasped the hook, one vigorous wriggle and the fish was free. A day or two later he again hooked the same fish; this time he did not play so well, and was easily liberated in the same way. Thereafter he hooked him several times, and eventually, as soon as hooked, the fish would swim to him with open mouth, evidently regarding him, not as the person who had hooked him, but as the kindly benefactor who freed him from a nasty biting fly!

As one grows older, the weight of the catch appeals less to one than does the overcoming of the difficulties in making it, and after a strenuous month in Norway, when one's muscles are hardened with wielding a 16-foot rod, and trying to restrain heavy salmon in a strong river, it is delightful to have a couple of days with a 9-foot rod on such a river as the Ebble.

It is a tiny stream, shallow and clear, and seldom more than 2 feet deep. Its pools and runs are flanked by trees and bushes. Its fish are free risers, and you do not need to hang about and wait for the taking fish. When you have caught your fish or, more often, put him down when freeing your fly—on 5x gut—from some obstacle, you need only move a few yards up stream and begin again. A trout of a pound

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there is one to be proud of; one of two pounds a great event.

I have had several delightful days there. Let us take a day in September. My host, Dr. Collier, and I stay at the little inn at Coomb Bissett—I love the Wiltshire names. After an excellent breakfast we put on our waders, and the innkeeper drives us a couple of miles up the valley in a trap drawn by a fat and sturdy pony. The sun is shining, the dew is still heavy on the grass, and when we dismount and walk through an apple orchard to the river, the trees are crimson with their fruit.

We creep up to the first pool. Near the top I see a nice trout feeding. Just as I am starting to crawl up to it, we hear a "plop" close beside us. The bank and grasses prevent us from seeing the rise, but it is evidently made by a fish just above us and close to our bank. I persuade Collier to cast for him. The fly is dropped just right, about a yard from the bank—of course out of our sight. We know that it can only travel a few feet before there will be a drag, due to the line on the grass; but almost at once we hear another "plop," Collier strikes, and the fish dashes down and across stream under a bridge where we cannot follow. He is, how-

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ever, gradually coaxed up and netted— $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. I then crawl up and cast over the other fish we saw rising. He takes my fly readily, jumps out of the water, and is off. In the next two pools we get nothing. We then come to a place where the branches of a tree growing on the other side of the river hang half way across it, only 3 feet above the stream. Under the opposite bank is a deep hole where good trout lie. To make the proposition more difficult, a fallen tree with its branches lies just behind us, some of the branches being 6 feet from the ground.

We can see at least two trout rising, and Collier makes me try. My first cast is short, my second fouls the tree behind. With my third, however, I get my fly well over, and at once rise and hook and ultimately land a fish of over  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. I then catch another smaller one which I return.

Presently we come to a place where lives a big trout which has baffled every fisherman. Some strands of barbed wire span the river, and the trout lies not a foot below this, in about 6 inches of water. He is busily feeding when we arrive. Behind us is a tree just far enough away to enable its branches, if one does not remember them, to catch the fly.

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My first cast lands a couple of feet short, my next just tips against the barbed wire and catches firm. I put down my rod, and Collier tries. His first cast, too, is short, his next drops not an inch below the barbed wire, and about 6 inches to one side of the trout. Will he take it?

We both thrill with excitement as it floats down. It is almost opposite the fish before he takes any notice of it, then he swims quietly to it, and gently sucks it down. When hooked, he dashes up under the barbed wire to the pool above. Collier jumps up and runs forward, keeping the point of his rod well down to the water, lest his line catch on the wire. The fish takes out quite a lot of line, but is gradually tired out, and eventually I slip the net under him—1 lb. 7 oz.

A little later on we come to a hatch-hole, and I get a trout at the tail of the pool below and then we sit by the bank and have lunch. Afterwards we have a few words with the genial old owner of the orchard which we pass, and pull and eat a few damsons and a couple of delicious apples.

A little further up stream the river is lost to view, as trees grow thickly along both banks, their branches meeting above. I am amazed when my host tells me that this is a very good

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pool to fish. We climb over a barbed wire fence, squeeze through the branches to the stream, and find ourselves standing in about 2 feet of water. The trees above almost shut out the sky and their branches are within 6 feet of the water. The river here is about 10 yards broad. Curiously enough, the trout here seem not at all shy, and we manage to catch three.

A little later on we come to a stream "behind the pigsties." Between the pigs and the river is a thick row of young poplars, and a similar row grows, too, on the opposite bank. The stream is about 20 yards long and some 6 inches deep, and at the top there is a pool to which the trout in the stream flee when disturbed.

By entering the river at the foot of the stream and keeping as close to the bank as the trees will allow, you may, by cat-like tread, catch a trout or two here before the rest of the fish are disturbed. We are lucky, and actually land our brace.

Anon we come to a mill; the water comes foaming out from it in a narrow stream bordered by a trimly kept lawn, and we have an excellent tea in the low-roofed room of the mill house. At the foot of the lawn the stream widens out into a pool, and in this pool are some quite large

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trout that are never fished for. These we feed with pieces of bread, and the pool is aboil with them as they dart for the food.

We long to go farther up the river, but there is only another half-hour before the pony trap will arrive at the bridge half a mile down stream to take us back; so we stroll that way and have a few casts in two pools below hatches and succeed in adding two more to our bag.

The shadows are lengthening as we put up our rods, there is the feel and smell of early autumn in the air and you can hear the robin singing, but I am well contented with our basket of sixteen trout and have a delightful feeling of physical tiredness and well-being as we jog back to the inn.

Before the fungus destroyed practically all its fish, probably the Mimram was the best dry-fly stream within 25 miles of London. The trout ran big; on the part I used to fish, nothing was kept under 2 lb. I have had many delightful days' fishing on it.

In 1906 I fished two days during the May Fly season. The morning of the second day was an unbroken series of disasters. Two big fish weeded and broke me, two more got off, another jumped and—a rare accident with trout—broke

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my hook. By this time I was getting rattled, and the next fish that rose to me I struck too hard and left the fly in its mouth. Then my luck changed completely. I saw three good fish lying within a few yards of each other and hooked and landed all three. I actually landed fifteen trout that day and eight the day before. The six I kept weighed 15 lb. 1 oz.; two were over 3 lb.

When the trout were not taking, I used to love to go after jack with a rifle or a long bamboo pole with a wire noose. The pole is some 10 feet long, and at the thin end is attached about 3 feet of piano wire with a running noose at the end. When you see a jack you slowly move the pole out a few feet above the stream till the noose is hanging close to the water about 6 inches in front of the jack's head. You then gently lower it and allow the noose to be carried down by the stream till it is round the gills of the fish; a rapid jerk and the fish is flung on to the bank. It is rather a fascinating amusement, because a considerable amount of skill is needed—any sudden movement either of your pole or yourself will inevitably frighten the fish. Also one feels one is doing good by ridding the river of undesirable fish. To be really successful you need a bright sun, no wind, and a low river.

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The pike has a curious combination of cunning and fearlessness in its character. The first time I went pike fishing was to a pond near Dartmouth. I went with a friend and we fished from a punt;—I used a live bait and he a spoon. Presently my float disappeared and I struck. My rod bent and I thought I had hooked the fish, but almost at once the bait came away, the bent rod shooting it along the surface of the water. To my amazement the pike followed it and again seized it. I rapidly reeled up my line and again struck, and this time hooked the fish.

Unfortunately I had overwound my line when reeling up, and could do nothing but hang on. The pike—it was a big fish—made a violent plunge and again the hold gave, and this time the bait flew into a tree behind the punt. Even then the pike was not afraid, because my friend threw his spoon in front of it, and it came to it, but would not take it.

I no longer use live bait; it is certainly a most killing method of fishing, but it is undoubtedly cruel—much more cruel than any vivisection that I have ever seen—and I have seen much. And yet anti-vivisectionists rave about the brutality and barbarism of the investigator and do not trouble about live-bait fishing. But then

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vivisection is done for the sake of humanity, to lessen its ills and sufferings, and the "anti's" belong to that curious type that tend to be more vehement in their opposition just because of this. They seem to imagine that the vivisector's plea that the result of his work will diminish suffering is merely a cloak behind which he can sate his lust for cruelty and torture.

But, held in restraint, this type may be of use to the world, so let us leave them and get back to the river—I apologize for leaving it.

I had another experience of the bold nature of the pike. My friend, Colonel Acland, had a lake of about 200 yards long and from 10 to 50 yards wide, varying in depth from 1 to 5 feet. He wanted to stock it with trout, but before doing so he had to exterminate the pike that lived in it. There had never been many, and he had succeeded in killing all but one.

One Sunday I and another member of his house party went to try and catch this last fish. He took a pole and noose and I had a small rod and a minnow with which I tried to foul-hook the pike. The water was very clear and there were practically no weeds, so we soon found the fish.

I stayed on one side of the lake and he on the other. I would cast my minnow over it and

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give it a sharp jerk, but it was very wary and would dart off before the hooks reached it. Then if it came within reach of the pole, the pole-bearer would try to snare it, but again it would dash off into the centre of the lake.

After several hours of chasing it, I climbed up a small tree, taking my rod with me, in order to cast my minnow farther, as the pike was just out of reach of the pole, at the other side of the lake, and I thought I could frighten it nearer the bank by casting my minnow at it. I did this; the minnow fell a couple of yards short. Instead of fleeing, this time the pike turned and slowly followed the bait. I went on reeling up, and eventually my bait was brought right up to the bank underneath me. The minnow fouled a reed on the bank and was half in and half out of the water, the pike lying with its nose about 3 inches from it. I gently jerked the minnow, when the pike made a sudden grab and seized it. I struck, hooked, and eventually landed it.

When the trout were put into the lake they thrrove wonderfully. A few years later, a friend and I in a few hours got twenty-seven trout weighing 51 lb. 6 oz.—quite amusing fun, but too much like fishing for goldfish in a bowl to be real sport.

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Still another example of the fearlessness of pike. One day when I was snaring jack on the Mimram, I saw one of about a pound. He was very shy, and several times darted away just when I thought I would get the noose over his head.

In following him—I was wading—I disturbed a small jack of about a quarter of a pound from a patch of weed. The bigger fish turned like a flash and seized and swallowed his small brother. In their struggles, they stirred up the mud, and I lost sight of them. When last I saw them, only the tail of the small fish was to be seen protruding from the mouth of the larger one.

On the Marden beat of the Mimram there was a flour mill, now, alas! pulled down. In the mill pool were several very big fish. One in particular used to irritate me. He spent his time in devouring water shrimps, and you could see his tail, as large as a salmon's, waving in the air. Even when he was rising to the fly, he never remained in the same position and the pool was deep, so that you could not see him.

A tiny window on the second floor of the mill directly overlooked the pool, so I got permission from the miller to go up with my rod and fish from there. With some difficulty I got my rod,

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arm and head through the flour-encrusted window, and found I could see absolutely clearly every fish in the pool. My big friend—he would weigh 5 or 6 lb.—was sailing round, and occasionally would come up and take a fly.

My heart thumped with excitement as I cast my fly in the direction I thought he would go, but, time and again, he would change his route or pass my fly by as he swam past a few inches away. I grew more and more cramped, my nose and eyes were full of flour, and I was just going to give it up when he came straight to my fly, rose and quietly sucked it down. To my horror, when I tried to strike, I found my arm was so wedged in the window that I couldn't, and the fish spat out the tasteless artificial.

Immediately below the mill there were bushes on one side of the stream, while on the other a drain from a feeder poured its water into the river. A good trout was always to be found here, and the bushes were just high enough to conceal the fisherman without interfering with his casting.

One evening I hooked the fish that was feeding there, but he broke me at once. He was not frightened, and it was interesting to see how he rapidly opened and shut his mouth and shook

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his head, in his endeavours to get rid of the hook. He did not succeed, because some hours later I hooked and landed him, and recovered the hook I had lost.

In this instance, the second fly was of a different pattern from the first. On another occasion I was fishing the lake I previously mentioned. Practically all the fish lay at the deep end of the lake. On this day, I was walking down the lake when I saw a big trout in the shallows busily feeding. I cast over him and at once hooked him. When he was almost ready for the net the hold gave way.

Some hours later, when I had finished fishing, I was walking back along the side of the lake, when I saw the same fish still feeding. The lake was very clear, there were no other fish near this part, and I feel sure I am not mistaken in saying that it was the identical trout. I was using the same fly with which I had hooked the trout before and dropped it lightly about 2 yards from the fish, and it cocked up, quite motionless. The trout swam confidently up to it, but stopped when it was an inch or two from it, then turned and fled as hard as it could go to the deeper part of the lake. The fish could not see me—I was a long cast distant and the fly absolutely

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still,—so I can only conclude that the trout recognized the fly, and remembered what happened when last it took it.

I remember one brilliantly fine Whit Monday on the Mimram. The May Fly were up, but my fishing in the early part of the day was spoilt by a swan. His spouse had two small cygnets, and he absolutely refused to allow me to fish anywhere near. Just as I was going to cast over a rising trout he would come along, beating the water with his wings.

In the evening—I was away from the swan region by this time—I saw a fish quietly and steadily rising. The trout was between me and the setting sun, and I could not see what he was taking. I thought it must be some small fly, and when he refused my May Fly I tried several, but with no success. I eventually gave it up, and discovered only when I was opposite him —what I ought to have known before—that it was spent gnats on which he was feeding.

I walked a few hundred yards along the bank of the stream, but could find no other fish rising, so I turned to go home. As I came near the place where I had seen the fish rising, I saw he was again feeding. A patch of weeds lay out of the water a yard or two above him, so I did

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not trouble to make a detour in order to fish from below, but cast my fly near where he was, and let it come to rest, my line lying on the reeds. He steadily fed on the spent gnats; one a foot from my artificial, one 6 inches, one 3 inches, then mine. I hooked and landed him; he was, I think, the most beautiful fish I ever caught, small head, hog back, in the pink of condition,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  lb.

Another excellent dry-fly stream near London used to be the Lea. As in the Mimram, practically all the fish were destroyed by fungus. Now, from Hatfield to Hertford, thanks to Mr. Stuart Hogg, it is gradually regaining its former reputation.

I used to belong to a small fishing Club which rented water below Wheathampstead, but the river there is too deep and sluggish to be a really good dry-fly stretch, and it was rarely that I caught any good fish.

One afternoon I was having tea in the little fishing hut when I saw the rise of a nice trout. I got into position and cast and the fish rose, but missed my fly. He did this on several occasions, and, between times, rose—and missed—the natural insect. I suspected him of being blind of one eye, and was practically certain of

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this when I walked up opposite him and found he took no notice of me.

For several afternoons, if no fish were rising, I used to employ my time fishing for him, because he was always at the same place and always steadily rising, though, poor beast, he did not succeed in feeding. Then one afternoon, I made a bad cast and my fly floated down at least 6 inches beyond him. Just when the fish was immediately between me and my fly, he rose and attempted to take a natural insect. I realized that my line must be very near his mouth, so I struck and actually hooked him in the roof of his mouth.

He was blind of the left eye and quite emaciated. I felt it was the kindest thing to destroy him, but I had not the heart to slay him, because he was the only trout I ever met on that part of the river that was a decent riser, and so rather guiltily I put him back.

One day another member of the Club and I were fishing together. We had wandered along the banks all morning without seeing a single rise, and decided to have lunch. I was carrying the luncheon basket over the river, the bridge consisting of a big log laid across the stream, when, to my surprise, I saw the rise of an apparently good

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trout. In my excitement, I forgot where I was, took a step backwards and plunged into the river.

As I fell, I realized that the lunch would be spoilt if it got wet, and for some time all that could be seen of me was an arm waving the basket in the air; the rest of me was all submerged. When I emerged, I found my friend in hysterics of laughter. It certainly must have been ludicrous, but the humour of that sort of thing appeals more, at the time, to the onlooker than to the performer.

One day I found a trout of about 2 lb. that was feeding—a really big fish for the stream. It lay where a small drain ran into the river in a pool barely a foot deep and a yard broad. Between the pool and river stretched a barbed-wire fence, and on the same side an ash tree stood at the edge of the stream, and a large black-berry bush embraced the tree and stretched over the ground almost to the pool. The barbed-wire fence prevented one from casting from the other side of the river, and I found that the only place from which one could cast and also see one's fly after it alit was from under the tree. I therefore crawled along the ground, being torn and scratched with the thorns, and, lying flat, succeeded in dropping my fly over the trout.

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He took the fly readily and I struck and hooked him. The moment he was hooked, he darted under the barbed wire and down stream. I had forgotten to calculate on the blackberry branches, and when I tried to rise, I found myself firmly tethered. Before I had got clear and dashed to the barbed wire he had gone 30 yards down the river into some snags and had broken me.

One of my happiest memories of the river is coming across five young kingfishers close together in a row, on a branch overhanging the stream. They sat looking preternaturally solemn, and allowed me to come quietly up to within a few yards of them before they flew away.

The credit of my largest fish was due more to the skill of Dr. Collier's netting than to my casting. We had fished all evening with small success; it was too dark to fish longer, and we were standing on a bridge putting up our rods when I thought I saw the dimple of a rising fish. I re-fastened my cast on to my line and placed my fly over the spot. Again I thought I saw a rise and struck and there was a violent commotion in the water. There were large patches of weed all over the river here, and almost at once the fish weeded me.

To get to the river, Dr. Collier had to negotiate

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a barbed-wire fence and a forest of nettles, head high. He did this in record time, and let himself down into the river. It was too dark to see how deep it was, but luckily it did not take him above his waders. He then got my line and gently pulled, the fish came free from the weeds, but at once dashed into the next patch. It was so dark that, more by intuition than sight, he sunk the net, brought it up, and scrambled to the bank. Inside the net were several pounds of weed and a fish of 2 lb. 6 oz.

Some miles farther down, the Lea becomes broader and shallower and better suited for trout. Before the fungus destroyed them, the fish above Hatfield were noted for their large size. The fishing was in the hands of a small Club, and as I knew several members, I had some pleasant evenings there.

On one occasion I was given two tickets for myself and a friend, and the member who gave them to me drew a plan of the river immediately below the place where the Great Northern Railway crosses it,—showing the exact spot where a very large trout lay. Two of the members of the Club had already been broken by it, and it was said to weigh somewhere between 6 and 7 lb.

The sun had set as my friend and I strolled

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up the river. About 50 yards below the place where the big trout lived we found a good fish rising. I made my friend fish for it; it rose, but missed the fly, and would not come again.

Whilst my friend was fishing I walked on, and as I came in sight of the spot marked in my map, I saw the rings made by a rising fish. Again and again it came up, and I could see it was indeed the great trout, rising quietly and steadily.

I called to my friend, and after some argument he was persuaded to try for it. In letting out line, unfortunately he caught his cast high up in a tree behind, and we could not dislodge it. He urged me to go on and cast for the fish myself, pointing out that one could hardly expect a great trout to go on rising as rapidly as this fish was doing for long, and that probably, by the time he was ready, it would have gone down.

I saw the force of his argument, and agreed. It was a very difficult cast. The trout lay near our bank of the river in a run about a yard broad between weed patches. Sedges stood high by the river's bank, and then there was a tall wooden fence over which one must cast. Behind was the big tree in which my friend had already come to grief.

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I thought it just possible that with a horizontal cast I might avoid the tree behind and yet get over the fence and sedges in front. But I scarcely hoped I could succeed. The trout was rising so freely that I felt that, could I but accomplish the cast, the game was mine. It was with intense satisfaction, therefore, that with the very first attempt I saw my fly drop lightly on the exact spot I aimed for. The trout was mine! and sure enough, he rose quietly and confidently, and I struck—struck, I am ashamed to say, as if I were striking a 40-pound salmon when fishing with prawn and a steel trace. He leaped out of the water just to show me what I had lost and to celebrate the addition of another fly to his collection.

If he had broken me in the weeds, I could have borne it, but to think I had overcome all the difficulties only to make an ass of myself was horribly humiliating. I would have loved to “kick very hard at a very small boy.”

Some years later I again spent an evening on the same water, but this time it was more like a nightmare than a holiday. It was in July, 1917. I met a member of the Club in London who had come over from France on leave. He told me that, as far as he knew, no one had fished

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at Hatfield that year, and suggested that if I could manage to go, it might be a welcome break.

One afternoon, shortly afterwards, I went down with a friend. The day was swelteringly hot, and when we got to the river we found it much too muddy for fish to rise. The path by the bank was overgrown with nettles, sedges and weeds. Planks in the marshy places had rotted and we sank above our knees. We were bitten by a particularly poisonous type of mosquito.

Presently we came to a number of boys bathing, and above this the stream was clear. We walked on, but could see no trout. Later on, a keeper came up and asked us what we were doing. When I explained, he told me the Club had been dissolved, but added that we might go on fishing as we could do no harm, seeing that all the trout had died.

I thought it just possible that there were a few survivors, so we carried on, and soon I saw the rings of a rising fish. I fished for it, whilst my friend went farther up the river. I presently caught it—a wretched dace!

Later on I did see a trout. It was so large that at first I thought I must be mistaken, and that it was a log. I crawled a little nearer and

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found that it was indeed a trout, and a trout of at least 5 lb. weight. I was going to cast for it when it fled—it saw my friend walking down the river before either I saw him or he saw me. He had come back to tell me that my car was not at the place I had arranged for it to be—where the Great North Road crosses the river. We walked sadly up the river and my friend fell into a deep drain concealed by rank vegetation. He got wet through and broke the rod I had lent him into three pieces.

When we got to the Great North Road, the car had still not arrived, so we trudged back towards Hatfield, he wet with muddy water and I with perspiration. We tried to cheer each other up by discoursing on the lovely long drink we would have when we got to an inn. Eventually, when we reached the inn, we found it was shut. I had some cherries and strawberries in the car, but when, after crawling for some further weary miles, we eventually found the car, we also found that my greedy chauffeur had eaten them all.

Even when I got back to London, my ill luck continued, because I found an urgent message to go to a patient who had been taken acutely ill, and had to dash off at once.

## CHAPTER VII

*May Fly on the Avon—A Wessex river—The Whorfe  
—How I tickled the stoat—Salmon-fishing on  
the Test.*

THANKS to the kindness of the Hon. Louis Greville, I have had several delightful week-ends during the May Fly season on the Avon at Woodford. All the same, I can remember once, after an hour's fishing, having the horrid, and to me unprecedented, feeling of becoming *blasé*. I arrived in the late afternoon, a moderate number of May Fly were on the stream, and the fish were taking them greedily. The casting was easy, and it needed no skill to hook practically every trout one saw.

Next afternoon there was, again, a very big rise, but this time the results were very different. There had been a sharp shower, and when it was over the light was extraordinarily clear. Fish after fish came up to my May Fly, inspected it, and refused to take it. I tried every pattern of

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May Fly I possessed, but always with the same result, and all the time, the trout were feeding greedily on the natural May Fly.

I do not know if I would have fared better if I could have used Mr. Dunne's patterns—he did not publish his book, *Sunshine and the Dry Fly*, till several years later—but I think, from my subsequent experience, that with his flies I should have succeeded.

On the last morning of one of my stays at Woodford, the old retired keeper, in whose house I lodged, told me that a big trout lay in a small feeder, and described to me exactly where to look for it. Between this feeder and the stream was a broad, thick hedge of beech. With some difficulty I pushed my way into this and stuck my head through.

I could see the fish, a few yards farther up, and, as I watched, a May Fly floated down and was devoured. The feeder was a tiny stream and the fish was lying in water not 6 inches deep, but a little lower down there was a deep pool, which, no doubt, was the trout's usual abode.

I went back for my rod, and shoved it through the hole I had made with my head. It was impossible to make a decent cast, but I dropped my May Fly into the stream and allowed it to

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be carried down by the current, pulling out line from the reel the while.

When I thought I had enough line out, I switched the fly up stream; it dropped quite nicely and was at once taken. It was not possible to strike properly, and when I did my best, and tried to tighten on the fish, it sprang out of the water and got off.

I reeled up, secured my fly, and was proceeding to withdraw my rod and myself, when, to my astonishment, I saw the trout rise and take another May Fly.

On one bank the feeder was skirted by the beech hedge through which I had fished, on the other by a meadow, and I decided I would go into the meadow and fish from there. It was a choice of two evils, because the feeder was about a couple of feet below the level of the meadow and if I got near enough to see my fly, I would be so close as certainly to be seen by the trout.

Luckily, however, my wife was with me, and we arranged that she should post herself in the hedge, at the spot where I had already hooked the trout, and shout to me if he rose to me. Accordingly I had a final look through the hedge, marking, in my mind, the exact spot on the bank over which I must cast, and then went down

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stream till I found a place where I could cross to the meadow.

When I eventually made my cast, my wife cried, "That's right . . . he's coming to it . . . he's looking at it . . . he's taken it!" The first view I had of him was when he dashed past me into the deep pool below. He fought well, but was finally landed—2 lb. 15 oz.

We had to catch a train at Salisbury to take us back to London that evening, and my wife left me to have a final cast whilst she packed our luggage. Before she left, I had got four more trout, from 1 to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  lb. and a grayling of 1 lb. 7 oz.

I spent my few remaining minutes fishing for a trout, which eventually I hooked, but he got off. I looked at my watch and saw I ought to be gone, so I hurried along the river bank on my way back to the cottage. The river, at this part, ran deep, and thick trees stretched out low down into the stream.

As I passed one of these trees I heard a "plop" which sounded to me like the rise of a big fish. I remembered, too, that I had heard the same noise at the same place earlier in the day. There was a clear gap of about 10 yards between this tree and the one farther up on the river's bank, so I rapidly let out line; salving my conscience

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with the thought that I would not be delayed for more than a minute.

I dropped my fly, with plenty of loose line, and watched it slowly float down and disappear from my sight as the branches of the tree hid it from view. Again I heard the "plop," struck on the chance that it was to my fly the fish had risen, and I was right! The trout dashed up and across the river, and of course it was quite impossible to follow it, as the river was 6 to 8 feet deep.

I had to sink the top of my rod into the river to prevent my line fouling the tree above. As my line, and then my backing, went whizzing out, I thought it would never cease till it was all gone and I was broken. Then, thank Heaven! the fish stopped, and I slowly began to regain line.

Still I had very little hope of landing him, as some of the branches of both the trees above me and the one below me were submerged, and entangled in them were, I should think, tons of cut weeds. Consequently I was obliged to go on playing the fish with the top of my rod submerged. Then, to my great relief, he went to the far side of the river, as he came down, and I was able to raise the point of the rod and play him in the orthodox manner. I felt that my only

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chance was to put on all the strain I dared, and net him before he got under either of the trees.

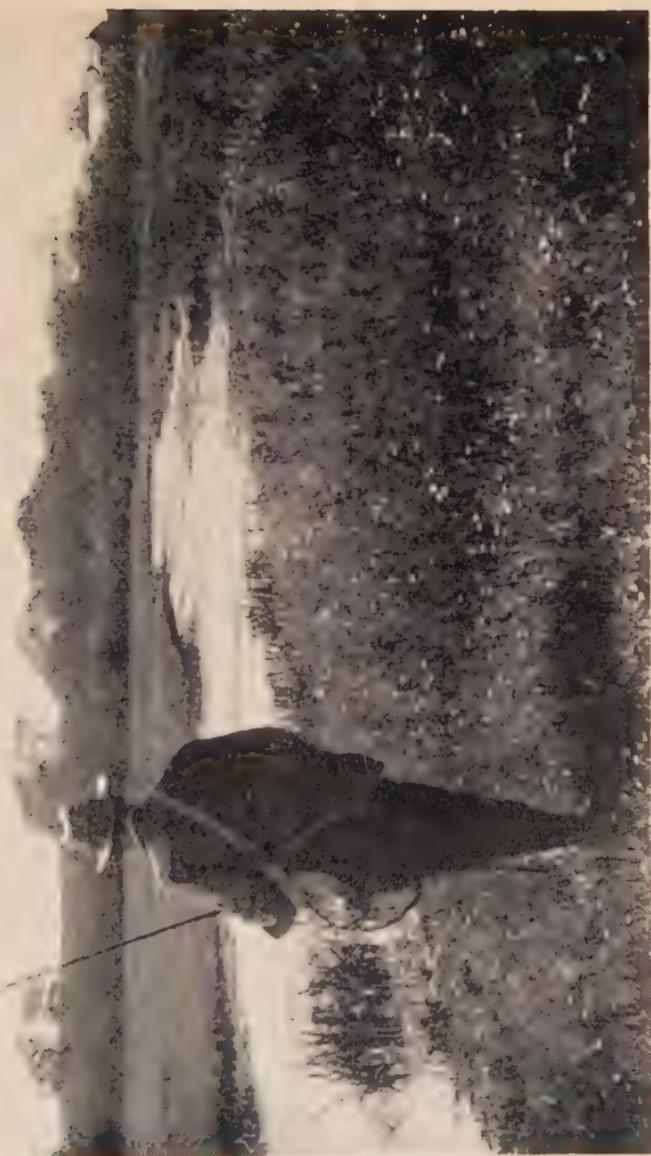
I reeled up, my rod bent almost double, and was stretching out my net when he saw me and dashed off, under the lower tree and weeds. I had to whirl the point of my rod down under water again. By great good luck my line kept clear of the weeds, and I slowly reeled in. But the fish absolutely refused to come from under the tree.

Meanwhile time was passing, and I knew that very probably we should lose our train. Finally, in desperation, by sheer brute force, I dragged him up to the net, got it under him, and fled back to the cottage with my hook still in him. He was a really beautiful trout of 3 lb. 10 oz. We caught our train.

Amongst the smaller dry-fly streams I have fished, I think the Piddle in Dorset and the Whorfe in Shropshire are amongst the most attractive.

I need not attempt to describe the scenery on the Piddle; it runs through the "Hardy country," and all lovers of Thomas Hardy's novels must be familiar with his beautiful pictures of his homeland.

The first time I went there was in the late May of 1924. I could stay only for one day's



THE PEOPLE.



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fishing, and when I arrived in the late afternoon, my host apologized and told me he felt he ought to have wired to me not to come, as he feared the river would be too big next day to be of any use. It had been raining heavily for two days, and when we went to look at the stream, we found it was turbid and had overflowed its banks.

Next morning the weather was fine, and though the river was still coloured and bank high, the scent of the wonderful variety of flowers and the glad songs of the birds made me feel that, even though I caught nothing, the day would be well spent.

My host—an excellent fisherman—took me to the foot of his water and told me to fish my way to the top—about a mile and a half of water. A few May Fly were on the stream, but I could not see any fish moving.

I strolled very slowly up stream; a snipe “drummed” overhead, and I was drinking in the beauty and peace of the surroundings, hardly hoping to use my rod, when I saw a May Fly disappear as it floated down a few inches from the opposite bank. I cast, and a good fish quietly took my fly and was hooked. A couple of logs formed a bridge over the stream a short distance below me, and as my trout dashed down

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stream, I had to throw myself down and pass my rod under this obstacle. By the time I had got to my feet again the fish had taken out most of my line, but I ran down, reeling up as I went, and eventually landed him. He weighed 2 lb.—a big fish for the stream.

As the day began, so it continued. Hardly any fish were rising, but those that did were all large. I landed five: 1·10, 1·14, 2·0, 2·0, and 2·4.

I had a curious experience one day on the Whorfe. I got down to the river early—too early for the trout, and I wandered quietly upstream without seeing a single rise. I stopped when I came to a place where I could see a good stretch of stream ahead. The weeds swung slowly in the clear stream, the sun was shining, bees were busy on the flowers about me, and I could hear church bells chiming in the far distance. I was standing absolutely still, watching the river whilst I absorbed the beauty of the place, when I heard a rustle at my feet. I looked down and saw a stoat gazing up at me. So we stood, both quite motionless, for about a minute, when the stoat evidently decided I was of no importance, and trotted off to a hole a few yards off and went down it. I still stood “frozen” and almost at once stoats began to come out of the

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hole. Although full grown, they were evidently young, as they began gambolling with each other like kittens. It was impossible to tell how many there were, as they dashed out of and into the hole, through the grass—even over my toes—taking not the slightest notice of me. Probably there were about seven or eight of them. They jumped over each other's backs and tried to get at each other's throats, but—this seemed to me almost uncanny—always in absolute silence. Presently they all raced one after the other into the thick grass by the river bank on my left hand.

Still I stood, and then saw to my right hand a half-grown dead rabbit being propelled by some unseen force towards the hole, its hind legs in the air. It came to a large tussock of grass and fell forward, and then I saw it was being carried by a stoat. The stoat—obviously the parent of the youngsters I had been watching—eyed me suspiciously and then seized the rabbit, dashed forward towards the hole and me as quickly as it could, and dragged the rabbit down it. One of the other stoats evidently got wind of the rabbit, because it came from the riverside just in time to see it disappearing down the hole. Naturally it grabbed the rabbit and tried to pull

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it back again. Its arched back was towards me as it tugged, and I could not resist bending down and scratching it. The moment I touched it the stoat flashed round and, as quickly, I took away my hand. It did not seem in the least afraid, but looked at me as much as to say, "Do that again and I'll bite you," and then turned again to its prey. Unfortunately, however, the rabbit had meanwhile been dragged so far into the hole that the stoat disappeared after it, and so I left them.

The Test is, of course, famed all over the world as a dry-fly stream; comparatively few people know that, near its mouth, it is an excellent salmon river.

The best stretch is at Nursling, and I have had several delightful days there. The fish are a beauty to behold with their small heads, hog backs and firm bright bodies, but it feels almost unseemly to walk through water meadows to the dry-fly stream, and, instead of gently dropping a dry fly with 3x gut on its surface, to hurl a large Jock Scott on salmon gut down stream—it seems a sacrilege. But you need strong gut. The fish are lively, and there are apt to be masses of cut weeds anchored in the pool, round which they may go and break you. This feeling of

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unseemliness is exaggerated when you fish the "Little River." The Test here divides into two parts, and this is much the smaller. At first glance you would think yourself lucky if you found a 2-pound trout in it; it is so narrow that an agile lad could jump it; but it is deeper than it looks, and salmon up to 40 lb. have been caught here.

To go for a day's fishing from London and bring back three salmon, all caught with fly, is, I think, not often done, but this I did on May 15, 1920. The day was bright and sunny, and I rose only the three fish I caught—12, 12, and 14 lb.—rather small fish for the stream.

The catching of the first was instructive. The river was very clear, and I was using a long line, lest the fish should see me. I dropped my fly near the opposite bank, and almost at once I thought I caught the gleam of a fish as it turned to it. I felt nothing, and could not have sworn that I had not imagined it; but, after working the fly to my bank of the river, I pulled in my line, gathering the slack in my hand, and made a mark on the grass with my boot. By not reeling in the line you can be sure of covering the exact spot again when next you cast at the same spot, the mark on the grass telling you where that is.

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I then walked a few yards up stream, filled and lighted my pipe, and again began fishing. The fish, as I said, was close to the opposite bank, and when I got to my mark, I dropped my fly just where I had dropped it before. Nothing happened, and I worked it slowly across the stream till it was close to my bank, and then slowly—perhaps more slowly than usual—I raised my rod to cast again. As my fly increased its pace, there was a dash as the salmon rushed at it and was hooked. I wonder how often a salmon follows the fisher's fly and would take it if only the pace of the fly were not increased too rapidly in making the fresh cast. I would impress on all young salmon fishers, as salmon often follow the fly and take it as it is being pulled out of the water and hence going to escape them, the importance of only slowly increasing the pace when beginning to cast.

There are trout at Nursling, too—great big trout. In my dealings with them they have the honours. One evening in 1922 the May Fly was up. I had fished for salmon all day, and two had risen to me, but I had hooked neither, and I decided to try and get a big trout. I took my 10-foot rod, and presently saw a big fish feeding right across the river. It was a

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long cast, the fish was cruising about, and I had fished for him for half an hour before I hooked him. The moment he was hooked, he jumped out of the river and then dashed up stream close to the opposite bank. My line fouled a pile of dead weeds and he was free. I thought 6 lb. a conservative estimate of his weight. I put on another fly, and hooked another fish almost at once. He got off just when I was getting the landing net ready—4 lb. I think.

I then went farther up the stream. A bridge spanned the river; above it a willow tree on my bank hung into the stream, and above this a branch stream from a mill joined the main river. Close to my bank of the main stream, above where the mill stream joined it, I saw a big fish rising steadily. The willow tree behind and the drag from the mill stream made the long cast difficult, and I was much pleased when I hooked the fish. But my pleasure did not last long. He rushed past me, past the willow and under the bridge into the pool below, and round a mass of cut weeds. When, with infinite difficulty I had crawled under the tree, had passed my rod under the bridge, and could reel in, I managed to land about a stone of these weeds, but no trout and no fly.

## CHAPTER VIII

*Norway—Comparison with Britain—Norwegian gaffers—The Aa—The Topdal—A thrilling adventure—The Laerdal—A lemming year.*

NORWAY is certainly a beautiful country, but I think that what impresses one most, when coming from England, is its *cleanness*. No doubt this is partly accounted for by the contrast with the filthy waters of the Tyne and the dirt, soot and mud of Newcastle. Thence you come to a land where every colour is pure—the blue of the sea, the light green of the fields, the deep green of the fir-trees, and the pure white of the snows on the mountain-tops. Dotted on the hillside are clean white wooden houses, and the absence of soot and smoke makes the atmosphere transparent in a way one rarely if ever sees in England. As your boat glides along the narrow fjord, with the snow-capped mountains rising almost perpendicularly on either side, and the waterfalls many hundred feet high dropping from the snow above

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down to the birch-clad edge of the fjord, you seem to have entered fairyland. All the same—it may be my insular prejudice—I think that one gets much more quickly sated with the scenery there than one could ever become in Great Britain. It may possibly be this very purity of the atmosphere which prevents one from getting the delicate lights and shades that are so pleasing here. I would liken Norway to a woman of statuesque beauty and no sense of humour, Britain to a pretty girl with a warm heart and a keen wit.

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that, as a rule, the fish in Norway give you battles which for excitement and sheer physical strain surpass anything that Britain can offer. But, again, I think to some extent that the same criticism applies to the fishing as to the scenery. The rivers are more rapid than in England; they are so clear that, by merely looking into the stream, you cannot tell if it is 2 or 8 feet deep. The water is “thin” and “hard,” and I confess to sometimes longing for the brown peaty swirl of a Highland river, where the stream gradually quietens down into the deep silent pool. This criticism applies more to the rivers in the Nord and Sogne Fjords that I have fished, than to those in the South. The latter are more like British

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streams, but since the war many of them are hardly worth fishing, as they have been ruined by excessive netting.

The strength of the current in these Northern streams is tremendous, and the fish make full use of this in their play; the power displayed by your first big fish and the actual physical strength needed to restrain it is a revelation.

As a rule, I have found the Norwegians a charming folk. They will try to drive a hard bargain, but they are cheerful, obliging and absolutely honest. For several years I lived in a bungalow whose door opened on to the main road up the valley, but we never troubled to shut the door at night, and on the bench in front of the door we left flies, casts, knives and reels, and none were ever stolen.

One day, as my gaffer and I were walking along the high road, he found a very good knife. He carefully placed it in a prominent place on the wall by the roadside. When I asked him if he did not intend to keep it, he looked very shocked and said certainly not, no doubt the owner would return to look for it.

The inhabitants of these lonely valleys have a toilsome life, working hard from dawn till dark, but they are cheerful and seem contented. I



PROF. BRAMWELL LANDING A 26 LB. SALMON ON LAERDAL.



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fear, however, that America is doing a great deal of harm to the Norwegian. A great many lads from Norway go to America. There they work industriously and return to their native land a few years later with a little money, a dislike of the strenuous, sedate life of their countrymen, and a taste for the flashy amusements and the vices of a city life. They breed discontent, and are not nearly so pleasant to deal with as are their untravelled kinsfolk.

The gaffers are not, I think, as expert in netting or gaffing fish as is the British ghillie, but as a rule they are full of enthusiasm. One day Professor Bramwell hooked a very big salmon which took him down about half a mile of river and went through the middle arch of a bridge. The gaffer could not swim, and the water was a raging torrent at least 10 feet deep, but my friend had to hang on to his rod, to prevent the gaffer seizing it and plunging after the fish.

Another friend of mine, Michael Stephens, who was fishing with me on the Laerdal, hooked a very big salmon with prawn. The fish went down stream and passed to the far side of a big rock that jutted out of the water in the centre of the stream and the line was fouled by the rock. Stephens drove from pool to pool in a carriage,

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and the pony was standing near by, harnessed but unyoked. Jens Klingenberg, of Lisne, a splendid fellow, was the gaffer, and without a moment's hesitation, he snatched Stephens' fly rod, took a flying leap on to the pony's back, and went off at the gallop to a bridge half a mile up stream. In a very short time he appeared galloping down the other side of the river, threw himself off the pony's back and cast the salmon fly so that it fouled my friend's line, and thus hitched it over the top of the rock. Unfortunately the salmon ultimately broke the line where it had rubbed against the rock, but Klingenberg's idea and the execution of it was a fine performance. Stephens told me of this at lunch time and said he had lost at least 40 yards of line. I was fishing the same beat that evening, and I thought that, most likely, the salmon would have gone down to the next pool and be resting there. I therefore put a heavily-leaded spoon on my spinning rod, cast straight across the river and reeled slowly up. I had not taken half a dozen casts before I could feel something dragging on my line. Each time I cast, I had the same feeling, and felt sure it was the lost line running along my own. I was right, because eventually I fouled the line and got hold of the

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end of it. I was very hopeful that I would get the fish, but the line must have become hitched round some rock, because when I put a strain on, I could feel no response. In the end, I tugged till it broke and recovered about 35 yards of it.

In his vivacity, Klingenberg is more like a Frenchman than a Norwegian; he talks very rapid, but not very accurate, English, and his mistakes are sometimes humorous. Thus, when telling how a friend of his went to find a stray sheep, and met a bear with cubs, he said, "My friend, he go to seek a vandered ship on the mountaignes, and there he meet a hen baar mit two childers." One evening bicycling home I had a small adventure with three somewhat alcoholic natives. He embellished it to a friend of mine:—"Blecky a very stark man. Three bad mens—not from near here—pull him off his seekle, and he PUSH their faces, and get on again and ride away."

Although I have had some delightful holidays in Norway, my first experience of the country was not of the happiest description. I was married in June, 1907, and my wife and I had a belated honeymoon in August on the Aa River on the Nord Fjord. The Aa is a small sea-trout stream, the valley is narrow, and the

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mountains rise almost perpendicularly on either side to a great height. Even in fair weather you see the sun only for a few hours daily, but a cold wet gale blew down the valley almost every day; the accommodation was moderate; we had not taken enough provisions with us, and it was almost impossible to get any fresh food locally. To make matters worse, my wife was ill during practically the entire period of our stay.

Another Englishman had a fishing near by, and had half the house in which we stayed. He had been fishing with me one day, and in the evening, as we were coming home, his small son met us in great excitement and told us that at last we would have fresh meat, as a sheep had been brought down from the mountains to be slaughtered. He told us it was tied by a rope to the fence outside the house, and added that it was very fierce and would charge you if you went near it. When we came in view of the sheep he demonstrated this by going up to it, being careful to keep farther from it than the length of the rope. The sheep put down its head and charged—charged with such force that the rope broke. The boy jumped backwards, lost his balance and fell on his back. The moment the sheep found itself free, however, it turned round

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and fled as hard as it could go up the mountain side. We watched, with our glasses, the entire male Norwegian population pursuing it; but it got clean away and was never caught. Much as we wanted fresh meat, our sympathies were with the sheep.

The Aa is a small river about a mile long flowing out of a loch of some 2 miles in length. At the top of this loch there is a stream of about 50 yards, and above this another loch of 4 or 5 miles. Although the river is essentially a sea-trout stream, a certain number of salmon run up to the lochs. Where the stream from the upper loch flows into the lower one is the best cast, and is fished from a boat. Our old gaffer, Halstan Muri, was the doyen of Norwegian gaffers, had owned salmon rivers and, I believe, had written a book about fishing in Norway.

One day I was fishing the loch where I have described, and landed a couple of sea-trout. I then hooked another fish which felt heavy; it never showed, so I gave the small rod to my wife, to let her have the pleasure of playing it. It was almost an hour before we had the first glimpse of the fish, and for a considerable part of the hour it had been directly under the boat with all my line and most of my backing out;

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the loch is extremely deep. My scales weighed only to 16 lb., so we had to guess the fish's weight when eventually it was landed; it was probably about 20 lb., the second largest fish, Halstan said, that had been caught on the river. Since then, I am told a fish of 40 lb. has been landed there.

The tail end of the upper lake was also a good place for sea-trout. One day, for a wonder, it was dead calm, so we sat and waited for the wind. After about half an hour I got tired of this, and told Halstan I would put a small minnow on my trout rod and fish with this. He tried to dissuade me, as he said I would only frighten the fish. However, I persisted. I waded in to the loch and pulled out some line, swung my minnow as far as I could, and reeled in. As my minnow came to light, I saw a fish following it. I went on reeling slowly in, and it was not till the minnow was close to my legs that the fish—a grilse—seized it, and was duly landed.

During my stay I had fair sport, but had I then known how to fish for sea-trout with the dry fly, I am sure my catches would have been much larger.

My next experience of fishing in Norway was very different. I was the guest of Mr. Camp-

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bell of Craigie, who had taken the foss beat on the Topdal.

The Topdal is a large river in the south of Norway about 12 miles from Christiansand. The country around is lowland in type, and heavily wooded. We lived in a most comfortable house, with a telephone, boats called not a quarter of a mile away twice daily,—in short, we had all the comforts of modern civilization. The beat we fished was the best on the river, and extended from a large foss (i.e. waterfall) at the top to a smaller one at the foot; a distance of about three-quarters of a mile. Below the lower foss the river was tidal. The river comes surging over the upper foss into a great pool which must be 100 yards broad and 250 yards long. One could spend the entire day fishing this pool from boat, bank or island. The island—Flikke Skjær—was, when the river was in order, quite remarkable for its wonderful fishing. It consisted of solid rock, which, when the river was moderately big, would be about 10 yards broad and 20 yards long, and yet, notwithstanding its small size, you could spend an entire afternoon fishing from it. Round it, the water was from 6 to 10 feet deep, and flowed at just the right pace for good fly fishing, whilst great submerged boulders

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caused swirls and eddies. You could begin to fish with a line not longer than your rod, and fish first one side, then the other, gradually lengthening your line till you were casting just as far as you could, and all the time be hooking fish.

Although the Topdal is a large river, the fish are surprisingly small. There are not many sea-trout, and in August—when I was there—there were many more grilse than salmon. The grilse average barely 3 lb., the salmon about 8. In three weeks to my own rod, I got 148 salmon and grilse, but some were caught with the worm. On one day I landed seventeen fish, on another sixteen; but the late Mr. Dowell, of Lumley and Dowell, told me that he actually landed forty grilse and eight salmon in a period of twenty-four hours, all got at Flikke Skjær.

The fish certainly took extraordinarily freely there. One afternoon I began fishing by crawling on my knees and dropping my fly close to the edge of the rock. Two grilse came simultaneously with a rush at my fly—one from under the overhanging rock, the other from further out. They were so intent on the fly that apparently they did not see each other, and had a head-on collision; my fly was untouched and they both retired, no doubt with bad headaches!

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On another day I was fishing on Flikke Skjær and Campbell was fishing farther down the pool from a boat. He had finished, and his boatman was rowing back when I hooked a grilse. The fish went off with a long run and then jumped high out of the water, alighting between the boatman's feet; I do not know who was more surprised, the fish or the boatman, but he quickly dropped his oars and held the fish fast.

I had one really exciting adventure on the island. On Sundays we did not usually fish, and had no gaffers. The day of my adventure was a very hot Sunday. In the afternoon the whole party—five of us—had gone in boats down the tidal part of the river for a picnic. There had been very heavy rain for two days before this and the river was very large. We had tea about a mile down the river, and after tea I began to think of a salmon I had risen and failed to hook the previous day. The salmon lay behind a great submerged boulder a short cast from the island. I felt sure he would come to me again, and eventually I got into one of the boats and rowed back by myself.

It was very warm, the stream strong, the boat heavy, and the tide against me, and by the time

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I reached the landing stage I was so hot that I had to go and change my clothing. Then I went to Flikke Skjær. When I got there I found the island almost entirely submerged; however, I dragged my boat up as best I could and began to fish. I knew the exact spot where the salmon had risen to me, and no sooner was my fly there than I was fast in the fish. I had been playing him for a few minutes when, to my horror, I saw that my boat had slipped down and was half in the water. As best I could, with one hand, I hauled it up again. This I did three times, but each time the boat had slipped farther, and the next time I looked, I saw that it was floating in the river.

I had three courses open to me and hardly a moment to decide which to adopt, as the boat was already beginning to float away. I could (1) abandon the boat. If I did this, it would be dashed to pieces in the rapids below and I would be marooned till I was found and another boat could be procured. I decided I could not do this. (2) Drop my rod and use both hands to pull up the boat. But this would mean losing the salmon. Unthinkable. So I adopted (3) the plan of stepping into the boat and trusting to luck. There were rapids 150 yards down

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the river, and in its then flood state I knew no boat could live down them.

Luckily for me, the boat was caught by an eddy and swirled into the lee of the island, but almost at once it was again in the stream and being hurried down stream. The salmon meanwhile had been putting up a great fight, and was still going strong; but I realized that I must finish the contest one way or another, so I simply reeled up, my rod bent double. My gut held, and so I grabbed the net—an enormous contraption on a thick 10-foot pole. I shoved this under the fish, dragged fish and net into the boat, threw them and my rod down, seized the oars and pulled for—literally—dear life. I was by this time travelling fairly fast down stream, but I succeeded in gaining the bank.

When I had knocked my salmon on the head—he weighed 9 lb. 2 oz.—and unhooked him, and had time to look round, I found I had lost my hat—where I knew not, had gashed my wrist—how I knew not, and I was again drenched in perspiration. I felt, however, pleased and proud that I had not given up the fight, but had hung on and won against great odds.

The Laerdal is the river in which I have done most of my fishing in Norway. It is a big river,

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though smaller than the Topdal. It is rapid, and, even when flooded, very clear. When I fished it there were no boats, and often it was necessary to cast a very long line to cover the best part of the pools. Wading is difficult and in many places impossible; probably owing to the strength of the current, the fish, when hooked, practically always go down stream, and trees, unfordable tributaries or bridges often make it impossible to follow them.

Under these circumstances, one has to do a great deal of "walking up." Walking up consists of walking up the river instead of attempting to reel in when you have hooked a fish. If your fish is anywhere near the tail of the pool and stops for a moment, it is fatal to try to reel in; if you do so, he will at once go off down stream again and before long you will come to a place where you cannot follow him and will be broken. As soon as the fish stops, you begin to walk up stream. At first you go slowly, almost inch by inch, but you can gradually increase your pace, and can eventually walk as quickly as you are able. It is an interesting fact, that if you give no jolt to your rod, the fish will quietly allow you to tow him right up the river. When the fish has reached the top of the pool, you walk towards him, reeling in as you go, but he will

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probably dash off again; you have, however, gained some ground which may decide the battle in your favour. I have walked up a fish and eventually landed him when he was at least 100 yards distant from me.

Even with the help of walking up, when you hook a really big fish, the odds are in his favour, and most of the stories of thrilling fights on the Laerdal end in tragedy.

The river runs through a valley varying in width from a few yards to a mile. On each side the mountains rise almost perpendicularly to their snow-clad tops, but birch trees grow even here, wherever they can find a foothold. By the river, here and there, are clumps of birches and alders and clear little streams purl under their shade. In July the air is almost oppressive with the odour of innumerable wild flowers.

Every few years there is a plague of lemmings, extraordinary little animals, looking like guinea-pigs, and absolutely fearless. As you are walking inoffensively along the river bank a lemming will dart out at you with a yell of fury. One night I was bicycling quietly back from fishing when a lemming at the roadside dashed toward me with a scream of rage and gave me such a fright that I almost fell off my bicycle.

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Another time, before going to bed, long after midnight, I went out of doors to drink in the quiet beauty of the scene. The moon was just appearing over the snow-clad mountains, there was not a cloud in the sky, and the valley was bathed in silent peace. My reverie was shattered by a lemming charging me with his warcry.

The Norwegians say that these little creatures often die of rage, and I can quite believe it. Another fisher on the Laerdal told me that one day she heard one screaming and went to see what was annoying it. She found it sitting on a heap of large boulders, into which it could have easily retired, quite beside itself with fury. A pet lamb and a kitten had made great friends and were teasing the lemming by going near it as if to attack it. Each time one of them approached, it jumped up and down, giving vent to the most piercing shrieks of rage.

The days shorten in August on the Laerdal with almost tragic rapidity. In July you can fish till midnight, but at the end of August it is dark by 8 p.m. It gives a feeling of sadness to see the summer dying so rapidly, and to me, personally, the background of one's pictures is almost as important as the foreground.

## CHAPTER IX

*Salmon on the Laerdal with fly, prawn and spoon—  
Runs with heavy fish.*

BUT I expect my readers have had enough of my backgrounds, so let us return to the foreground —the salmon and sea-trout. From the many thrilling fights I have had, I find it difficult to make a selection. Let us begin with an evening on Nedre Lisne, one of the best pools on the Laerdal; August 5th, 1923. I began by fishing for sea-trout with dry fly and got three, largest  $3\frac{3}{4}$  lb. Then I took my salmon rod.

The evening and the river seemed perfect, but I fished down the pool carefully three times, without getting a rise. By this time it was 10 p.m., so I put on a large Jock Scott as my final effort. I was about half-way down the pool when I hooked a really big fish. Twice I had to walk him up, once when he was practically out of the pool. Eventually I had him beat, my gaffer was kneeling by the bank, gaff

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poised, and I brought him up to within striking distance. The gaffer raised his arm and hesitated, the fish saw him, made a despairing plunge and was gone. The fish was certainly over 40, probably 45 lb.

Despair in my heart I strode to the top of the pool and prepared to fish it down again. I tore out a few yards of line, cast, tore out a few more and cast again, never dreaming that a salmon would be lying close to my bank. But a salmon was there, and took my fly just as I was whipping my line out of the water. I had hoisted him half out of the stream before the hold gave way.

By this time I was becoming demoralized, and felt I must take a firm hold of myself, so tried to fish carefully. Almost at once I was rewarded and hooked and landed a small fish of 11 lb., and again, almost at once, another. He played strongly, and when I saw he was a really big fish, I felt sure I should lose him; however, all went well, and he was eventually landed— $33\frac{1}{2}$  lb. But that evening dwells in my memory as one in which I lost possibly the largest fish I ever hooked with the fly.

Another very large fish was hooked by me in a pool called Kuvillard. He, straight away,



A VARIED BAG.

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took out a great deal of line and got right to the foot of the pool. He then hesitated, and I began to walk him up. I did not know this part of the river well, and when my gaffer told me there was a good place at which to land the fish a few hundred yards down the river, I stopped walking up and began to reel in. The fish at once went down stream and I ran towards him, reeling up as I went. When I got to the backwater the gaffer had spoken of, I found it not a foot deep, with a strong stream rushing past it. To pull the fish in here was impossible, and I had to follow it down stream till we came to a bridge, through the middle arch of which the fish went. I was here for about half an hour, occasionally gaining a few yards, occasionally losing them, but in the end the fish broke me.

At the top of the Laerdal, the valley is very precipitous, and the road is narrow and cut out of solid rock. In some places there is a sheer fall from the road to boiling cataracts hundreds of feet below. Under these circumstances, motor cars are allowed to run only at stated times, and a string of cars—"bils" they are called—pass up and down the valley at definite hours. One morning I was fishing a pool

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along the edge of which the road runs. Just as the first "bil" appeared, I hooked a salmon. The occupants of the "bil" asked the driver to stop, and the cars following were necessarily obliged to halt too. It so happened that there was an excursion of some sort that day, and the excursionists, about sixty of them, got out to see the performance.

My gaffer was not good, but both the salmon and the gaffer rose to the occasion. The fish dashed all over the pool, occasionally springing high out of the water, and falling back with a resounding splash. When I brought him up to where my gaffer knelt, the boy made a skilful lunge, and pulled ashore a fish of  $20\frac{1}{2}$  lb. Loud cheers from the multitude, whilst we made our most graceful bows!

In quite a number of places the bank of the river is formed by great boulders, placed there to prevent the stream from changing its course. Hunderi is one of the best pools on the river and its left bank is formed in this manner. Half-way down the pool a pier is built out, and I used to begin fishing at this pier, as, in the event of my hooking a salmon farther up, it might disturb the whole pool.

One morning I stepped on to the pier, and

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dropped my fly in the water to see how it worked, preparatory to letting out line. I was just pulling my fly from the water when I saw a salmon come from the depths and make a dash at it. It missed it, so I dropped my fly again, and this time the salmon, a fish of 14 lb., came quietly up, took the fly, and was duly landed.

The best pool on the Laerdal is called Bjorkom. It is quite a short pool, but above it there is a long series of rapids, and generally there is an enormous stock of salmon resting in the quiet before they travel up this heavy water.

In 1926 our party had the right to fish the pool on four days, and I had one of these days, July 30th. Unfortunately for me, the river was low, and almost all the salmon had gone up the rapids. The day was warm and cloudless, and I fished the pool with small flies, medium flies, large flies and dry fly, and had never a rise.

By the way, although Mr. Hewitt catches many salmon with a large fuzzy dry fly in America, I do not think it any use in any of the rivers I know in Europe. On the other hand, Mr. Wood's method, which he uses on the Dee with a fine shanked hook just submerged, is often very deadly.

In the rapids above Bjorkom there are a few

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places, as, for instance, behind great boulders, where salmon may rise, and when I have failed in the pool, I go and fish these. Before long I hook a fish and he goes with a rush down stream to the pool. The going on the bank is very rough, and though I run as fast as I can, he has most of my line out before he reaches the quieter water. I am just congratulating myself that I have succeeded in overcoming my difficulties when the hold of the hook gives and he is free.

Sad, hot and perspiring, I walk back and almost at once hook another salmon. Again the fish rushes down stream and again I run and scramble after it. This time the hook holds firm and he is gaffed— $21\frac{1}{2}$  lb. Then I have lunch, sheltering myself from the blazing sun behind a big rock. It seems hopeless to fish till the sun is less directly overhead, so I lie drowsily listening to the rush of the water and the droning of the bees as they go from flower to flower.

. . . Yes, I have been sound asleep, and it is five o'clock, so my gaffer and I have tea from the thermos and I start to fish again. Again the pool proves a blank, and again, just where I hooked the two salmon, in the morning, I am

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fast in a fish which, like the others, rushes down to the pool. He fights doggedly, but at last I bring him up to the gaffer, who is kneeling on a shelving rock.

My gaffer is an excellent man, and makes no mistake; but as he lifts the fish from the water its struggles separate the wood of the gaff from the steel and the gaffer falls on his back, the wooden haft of the gaff clasped in his hand, waving in the air, whilst the fish slithers back into the water and goes off with the steel still embedded in its side. By great good luck the fish is very firmly hooked, and after some time I bring it up close enough for the gaffer to grasp the steel and carry it ashore. A very pretty fish of 22 lb.

And now it is time to go home, some 15 miles away. The sun has gone a long time ago from the valley and the air is crisp as we motor back in the dusk, but the snow on the mountain tops still catches the sun's rays, and the air is heavy with the scents of flowers and new-mown hay.

On August 30th, 1926, I had another delightful day, this time on the top beat of the river. Here the river is much narrower and goes through a precipitous gorge at the top of

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which there is a great foss up which the salmon cannot pass. I can fish only two pools, the Round pool and the Foss pool, both quite small, but holding a great many fish. The day, again, is bright and cloudless, and the river is low. I have a motor drive of some 20 miles and then my gaffer and I cross the river by a rather doubtful bridge and scramble down the steep path, through birch and alder trees to the Round pool. I can fish the river only on one side, and there are only two places from which to fish the pool—one, about 10 yards long, by the edge of the river, near the top of the pool, and the other from a platform, about 30 feet above the water, near the foot.

I begin by the river bank with a 2·0 Black Dose—about the best fly on the Laerdal—and am soon fast in a fish which is successfully landed. Then we go to the platform. From this height we can see every salmon in the lower part of the pool. My gaffer—the same man I had at Bjorkom—is generally very calm, but he begins shouting, and his English, which is never very good, gives way completely in his excitement. He gesticulates wildly, pointing right to the tail of the pool and in rapid Norwegian tells me that we are looking at the largest salmon he

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has ever seen. All over the pool salmon from 10 to 30 lb. are dotted about; but when first I see the fish he is pointing to, I can hardly credit my eyesight. I tell him it must be a great boulder, but whilst I am watching, it slightly changes its position. It is certainly the largest salmon I have ever seen. I put it down at 70 lb.

I ignore all the fish nearer me, and with nervous fingers pull out line. It is a long cast, but not, from the height at which I am, a difficult one. I cast across the river and can see my fly working its way past the fish. The first time the fly passes him he wags his tail and moves slightly. Again and again I cast, and fly after fly I show him; but he takes no further notice, and at last I give up the attempt. I try to console myself by thinking that even had I hooked him he would certainly have broken me.

So I reel up and begin fishing for the salmon nearer me. One comes up to my fly and follows it right round to the bank, but will not take it. Two more come up and inspect my fly; but they, too, will have none of it. Then I go back to the bank at the top of the pool and with a 1·0 Silver Grey I hook and land another fish.

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After lunch I go up to the Foss pool. The river here is not 15 yards broad and the pool is fished from a platform about 20 feet above the water. My friend Mr. Lockhart-Mummery had fished here a few days before, and told me he had found that he could fish the entire pool without casting, by simply changing the position of the top of his rod, and gradually letting out line. I follow his advice and find that my fly works its way from bank to bank, right down to the tail of the pool. But I have never a rise, although I can, from my position, see my fly passing over the heads of numerous fish. I therefore reel up, and take my 11-foot green-heart spinning rod with silex reel and cast a prawn across the pool.

On both sides the rocks are overhanging, and from under the opposite bank I see a salmon dash out and seize my prawn. I strike, but too quickly and do not hook the fish. A few casts later another fish comes to the prawn. I restrain my impulse to strike till I can feel the fish, and this time I hook him. The line cuts the water as he rushes up the pool towards the foss. I have to scramble over some boulders, and stand on a rock which is covered with spray from the foss, whilst the salmon sounds right

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under my feet, beneath the overhanging ledge on which I stand. My gaffer crawls still nearer to the foss and lies flat. Yard by yard I get the fish up, and at last my gaffer has him fast. I scramble up to him and take the gaff with the struggling fish on it whilst he rises, and gets a stone with which he gives the *coup de grâce*.

He puts on a fresh prawn and I go back to the platform. I see a salmon lying in quite shallow water right at the tail of the pool. The bottom of the river is covered with jagged boulders, and I know I am more likely to catch the bottom than the fish, but I determine to try. "You've hooked the bottom," says my gaffer, but from where he is standing he cannot see as well as I can, and I answer by striking, and the fish rushes across the pool. For a time I fear he will go down stream, in which case I am almost sure to lose him, but at last he decides to go up to the foss. I follow him, and my gaffer again lies prone with gaff ready. The fish is far under the rock on which I stand, and although I reach the point of my rod as far across the stream as I can, I cannot prevent the line from grating along the rough stone. If this continues long my line will be worn through, so I try to drag the fish up by main force, when

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suddenly I almost fall on my back—the hold has given and the fish is free.

My gaffer puts on another prawn, this time on spinning tackle, and I cast up stream, and reel up rapidly when I guess my prawn to be near the bottom a few yards above me. Twice, in rapid succession, I hook a fish and succeed in landing both.

Then we go down to try a fly on the Round pool again, but I find Mr. Phelps fishing it from the other bank. The cliff on his side rises 60 feet sheer from the edge of the river, with only about a yard of path between; there must be 20 yards of dead water between him and the stream, and it is a real pleasure to watch the masterly way, with the Spey cast, in which his line lightly ripples over the surface, and his fly comes with a little “plop,” time after time, to just the right spot. He has no luck, however, nor have I, when I fish the pool after he has finished.

The shadows are lengthening, so my gaffer bundles our fish into a sack, I help to hoist it on his back and then we struggle up the steep slope, he with the fish, I with rods, tackle and luncheon basket. The fish are a peculiarly even lot—17,  $17\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $19\frac{1}{2}$ , 20 and 20 lb. The

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nights by now are chilly, and I am glad I have my warm coat as our car rushes down in the dusk through the winding valley.

For prawn fishing on the Laerdal one needs powerful tackle. The trace is of twisted wire, the hooks large and strong, and one fastens a large round perforated bullet through a piece of thick copper wire about a yard from the bait. The wire is bent round the heavy bullet. If the bait sticks on the bottom, with heavy pulling the wire is straightened, the bullet freed, and, with luck you may recover the rest of your tackle.

I get my tackle from Forrest in Thomas Street. Here I would like to say a word about the late John Forrest. "The most honest tradesman I have ever met," as an Englishman who generally dislikes Scotsmen once described him to me. Often, when leaving a fishing tackle shop, the salesman will say to you, "Of course you've got 'Smith's fancy' or 'Jones's Favourite'" or some other unknown fly. If you have the strength of mind to refuse to take it, when you are on the river bank and the fish are not rising, you feel you might be catching them if only you had bought the fly; if you do buy it, you probably waste your time and money.

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Forrest was very different. "Oh, no, doctor," he would say to me when I suggested getting some other flies. "You have plenty flies." Then he would add, "These fancy flies are more for the fisherman than the fish." He told me how one day a Jewish millionaire had come to his shop to get salmon flies. On a box on the counter were a number of shop-soiled flies, marked at prices from 3*d.* to 1*s.* The millionaire offered him £5 for the lot. The offer was accepted, but Forrest found that if he had bought them at the prices marked, they would have cost the purchaser only £4. "I just made up the difference with new flies," he said. Always cheerful, obliging and resourceful, his practical knowledge of fishing was of the greatest help to his customers, and I, like many others, looked on him as a friend, and would go to his shop to tell him of my adventures on my return to Town. He died, as I am sure he would have wished to do, on the river bank with a rod in his hand.

The bed of the Laerdal is composed chiefly of large jagged boulders, and to catch salmon on the prawn the lure must travel close to the bottom. As a result of this, one often gets caught up and loses a great deal of tackle.

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One year we defined it:—Prawn fishing on the Laerdal is an exciting sport. It consists in dumping your prawn along the bottom of the river, and recovering it intact at the end. You will seldom, if ever, be successful in this. Occasionally a salmon interferes with the sport by seizing the prawn. If so, get rid of him as soon as you can and begin again.

Personally, I do not like it nearly as much as fly fishing, but there is certainly a very great deal of skill needed to be a successful prawn fisher, and after some practice it is wonderful how one develops almost a sixth sense and is able to jump the prawn over the boulders without being caught up. And the really big fish take the prawn more freely than they take the fly.

A friend of mine, who was fishing with me, had a curious experience with the prawn. It was near the end of the season and most of the salmon had passed farther up the river. He saw and hooked a very large fish on the prawn. After a long fight the fish broke him, and went off with his trace. Two days later he was fishing the same pool and saw the same fish. He cast his prawn over it, but it ran up-stream. He followed it, cast again, and again the fish went some distance farther up. Again he

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followed it and cast. This time the fish turned, as in fury, and seized his prawn. He hooked it, but almost at once the hold gave, and the fish was free. It ran still farther up the pool, and his gaffer, Jens Klingenberg, asked if he might not try for it once again. My friend gave him the rod and Jens almost at once was fast in the fish. He played it for some time, but it got off. When my friend reeled up he found that he had not hooked the fish at all, but had fouled the trace he had lost two days ago, and he recovered this with the prawn hooks at the end. No doubt the salmon felt grateful to him for ridding it of this encumbrance!

As in this case, salmon often show a curious mixture of timidity and aggressiveness; in this respect they behave more like pike than trout, the reason probably being that neither the pike nor the salmon have many underwater enemies they need fear.

The question as to whether fishing a pool with prawn spoils it for the fly, is a much debated one. Personally I think as a rule it is a mistake to fish with prawn if you intend, the same day, to fish the pool later on with fly, as it is very probable that you may scare some of the salmon out of the pool altogether, when they will go

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farther up the river and be lost to you. On one pool in the Laerdal the salmon seldom rose to the fly; we fished it from the beginning of our stay with prawn, as we felt that even if we did scare the fish out of the pool, they would go to other places where we might catch them with fly. It was in this pool that I had the following experience.

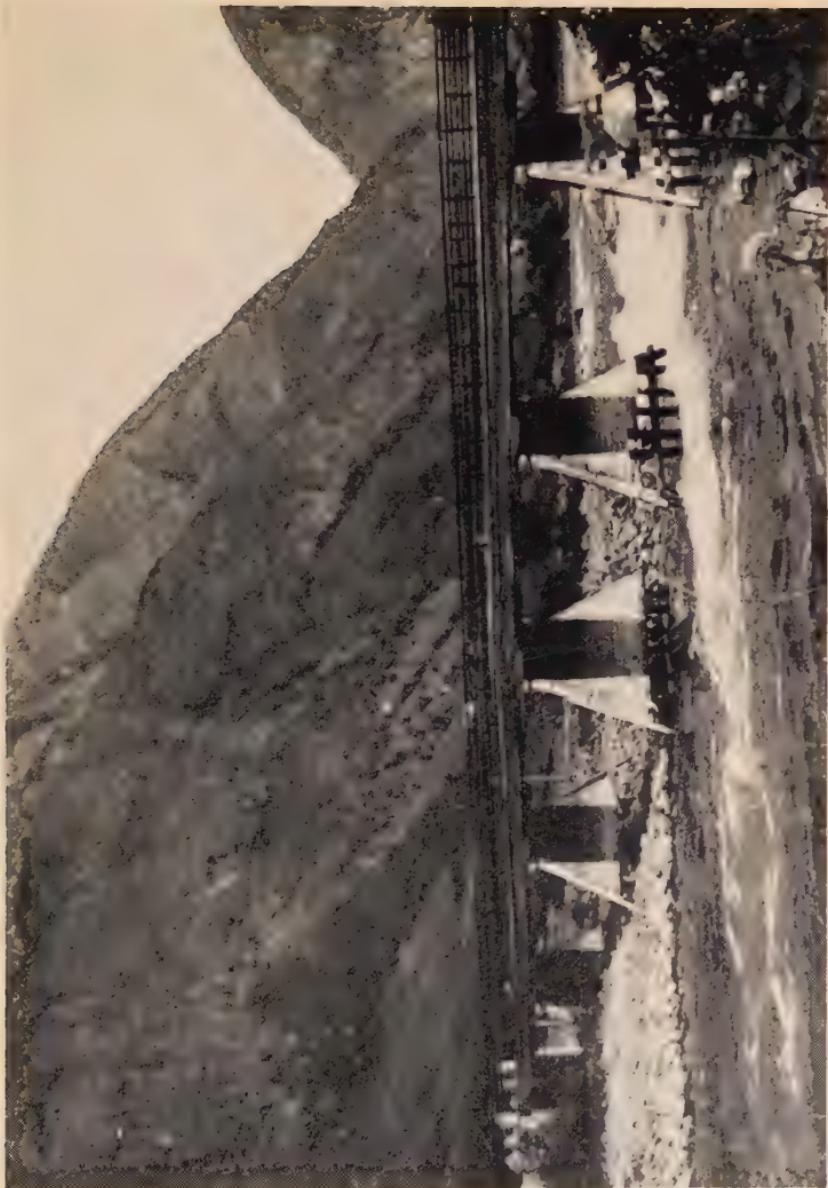
A bridge formerly spanned the river here; all that remained of it was a high stone parapet on one bank of the river. In the centre of the stream lay an enormous boulder, the water swirling round it and forming eddies behind it, and it was in this comparative calm that the salmon chiefly lay. It was this rock that fouled Stephens' line, as I described on page 157.

Standing on the parapet, I had fished the entire pool without any incident, but I knew that there was still a yard or two just behind the stone where my prawn had not been. To get my prawn there I must cast it well above and beyond the stone into the rushing current, and I knew that I ran a much better chance of hooking the bottom than hooking a fish. However, I determined to try. I cast, and when I judged that my prawn had reached the desired spot, began to reel up. There was a check,

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and I struck, but no answering jerk followed. I pulled and tugged, but I had apparently hooked the bottom, so I gave my rod to the gaffer and told him to walk up stream and try and disengage the bait. He did so, but after some strenuous tugging and jerking returned, having had no success. I told him not to try further, but simply break the line.

He therefore wound the line round his hand and walked slowly backwards. Just when I expected to hear the line snap, he suddenly shouted, "It is a fish!" Quite incredulous I grasped the rod. The river was high, large waves were being shot over the top of the rock on to my line, and I thought it was this that had caused an occasional jerk I had felt; but I now saw my line coming very slowly, almost inch by inch, towards me. Below the parapet was a wooden platform running for about 30 yards, and below this again were rapids. I realized that I must get off the high parapet and on to the platform as quickly as I could, and so ran back to where the parapet left the sloping bank, down the bank and across a narrow plank on to the platform. Meanwhile the salmon was still very slowly moving towards me.



BØ BRIDGE, LAERDAL (RIVER VERY LOW).

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I continued to reel up, putting on a very heavy strain. Suddenly the fish, an enormous salmon, made a great leap right out of the water and then tore off down stream. I ran for all I was worth along the platform, putting on as much break as I dared; but it was all to no purpose, the fish dashed into the rapids and broke me.

When the river is large, especially if it is rising, the spoon is sometimes very deadly. One Sunday morning Mr. Lockhart-Mummery and I had quite a strenuous time with it. On Sunday mornings we did not have our gaffers and spent the time lazily reading, writing, or strolling down to the river. At that time I had never used the Silex reel and asked Lockhart-Mummery to come down to the river and show me how to work it.

At the top of our beat a bridge spanned the river, and as we were crossing it we stopped and watched the rushing swirling stream below (*vide* picture facing page 188). It was a swelteringly hot day, and the water looked cool and inviting. Possibly a spoon in it might be inviting too, so the spoon was dropped and went spinning merrily down the current. It looked absurdly big and bright, but a salmon evidently thought it attractive and was hooked.

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It was a small fish and Lockhart-Mummery could keep it from going out of the pool, so I went down and waded up to my thighs in the rapid current and gaffed it. I turned to wade to the bank, holding the fish well out of the water, when some of the hooks on the spoon fouled my clothing. Luckily the fish was very small—only 5 lb.—but it is a most uncomfortable position to be in, standing on uneven slippery boulders, a rushing torrent up to your thighs, one arm holding the gaff raised above your head whilst a wriggling salmon is attached to your person by several hooks.

By great good luck I succeeded in getting out of the river without losing either the fish or my balance. I hid the salmon under a bush and we walked about a mile down to Charlie Bø, our best pool. Lockhart-Mummery gave me an excellent demonstration of how to use the Silex, and in the process fished down to the foot of the pool, but had no touch.

He then made me try to cast. I made very heavy going of it, but at about my third effort, when the spoon had gone into the river with a heavy splash not 15 yards from me, a salmon came at it with a rush. It was only then that we realized we had left our gaff at the bridge.

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After playing the fish till he was pretty well done I gave Lockhart-Mummery the rod, waded in and tailed the fish—17 lb.

It was now time to go back to lunch, so we started homewards, but as we came to the top of Charlie Bø, I saw one spot that had a particularly inviting swirl in the water and asked Lockhart-Mummery to bring his spoon over it. He did so and at once hooked another salmon. It was not a very big fish, but was very lively, and took him right to the tail of the pool—about 300 yards—before I could wade in and tail it—13 lb.

We had come out not really to catch salmon but for a lesson in casting, and had brought nothing with which to carry the fish home, and we found we did not even possess string. We therefore broke down a branch from an alder bush, passed it through the fishes' gills, and each took an end. Before we had gone 100 yards, the weight of our largest salmon had torn its gills through, and it dropped to the ground, so we had to lug it along as best we could. We got back late for lunch, wet through with perspiration, but greatly pleased with our morning's lesson.

On August 12th, 1926, the river was flooded.

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I was fishing a pool called Hunderi, which is one of the largest and best in the river. In the morning, with spoon, I hooked a big fish. Twice it looked as if it would go out of the pool, but by walking it up I gradually got on terms with it and eventually brought it to the gaff. My gaffer made a shocking bad shot and simply scratched the salmon's back. The fish dashed right out into the stream again, but luckily was well hooked, and the next time the gaffer made no mistake and dragged a 36-pounder to the bank.

That afternoon I again hooked a fish almost at the same spot. I was using a Silex steel with patent break, but from the moment it was hooked the fish never hesitated for a moment; and although the pool continued for at least 250 yards below where it was hooked, the salmon went right through this and into the rapids below with its first run, and was still going at express speed when we parted company; it took 70 yards of my line with it. Only once before—again on the Laerdal—have I had the sensation of utter impotence with a fish which I had then. It felt exactly as if I had hooked an express train.

## CHAPTER X

*Sea-trout on the Laerdal—The dry fly—How and where to fish—Some strenuous days.*

As I have attempted to show, salmon-fishing in the strong waters of a Norwegian stream is a strenuous business. We will now pass to the sea-trout fishing there. It sounds a comparatively peaceful occupation, and it is true that you do not need to have the physique of a heavyweight boxer to be really successful, as you do with salmon fishing, but you must be in excellent condition and able to sprint over boulders and through rushing torrents.

Dry-fly fishing for sea-trout is, I think, one of the finest and most difficult forms of sport that there is. I use a 10- or 11-foot split cane rod. You must have on your reel a line and backing of at least 100 yards. The cast should be 3 yards, tapered to about 1x. The best flies are:—

- (1) A fly with dull red wool body and cochy-bondhu hackle.

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- (2) Hare's ear and ribbed gold body; hackle of hare's fur.
- (3) Spent gnat dressing for body, gutta percha over straw; hackle olive dun, and wings of stiff deer fur.

These flies are specially tied for me by Ogden Smith.

- (4) A large Tupp.

I generally use hooks of sizes 5 or 6 (new scale); I think the sea-trout would probably take a smaller fly than this as well as, or occasionally even better than, these, but when casting a long line in rippling water, it is difficult to follow a small fly, and even if one hooks the fish, one misses one of the chief pleasures of the sport—to see the slow deliberate rise of a big trout.

It is essential to cast a very long line, as the sea-trout generally lie in fairly shallow water and are very shy. If you stand on the bank, you can see the fish, but if you can see them they can see you too, so it is much better to wade in at the tail of the pool and fish it up "blind." The sea-trout are very particular in their choice of position; the stream must run at just the right speed, the bottom must have just the right sort of stones—not too large and not too small, and they prefer the water to be about 3 feet

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deep, though I have hooked large fish in water barely deep enough to cover them.

By "shooting" one's line one can get out a few yards longer. I begin by casting directly above me, near the bank. The next time the fly is placed a yard farther out, and so on until all the likely places within reach have been covered. I then wade a few yards up stream, and do as before. One must watch the fly carefully as it floats down stream, pulling in line as it approaches.

In some places you see the sea-trout, but as a rule, as I have said, it is better that you do not, and your first intimation of a rise is to see a large nose appear out of the water, and your fly disappear. You cannot be too slow in striking. Generally the sea-trout allows your fly to pass him before he appears to take any notice of it. Then he turns round, follows it quietly and quietly seizes it, and, again quietly, swims back to his original position. It is very difficult to restrain the impulse to strike when you see a really big fish disappear with your fly, but unless you do so you will miss fish after fish.

I remember I was fishing one day accompanied by a gaffer who had not been with me before. A big fish rose to me. He thought I had not

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seen it and shouted, "Een fisk!" "Ja," I answered, and only *then* struck and hooked my fish.

If a large fish rises to you and misses the fly, it will seldom rise again for a few minutes, but if you wait for five minutes, the chances are that it will again try to take your fly.

Probably because the water is so clear, the trout fight desperately at the end when they see the gaff or net and very often manage to get off. If the bank is suitable—a gently sloping shingle—you can land them much more quickly by dragging them ashore. You must get well away from the bank, and must have a considerable amount of line out, otherwise the fish will see you and refuse to come near. But if you are far enough away from the fish and pull him shorewards, he will jump, and with every jump your line brings him farther in, and in this way you get him right out of the water.

I have never been broken by a fish when doing this, but the danger of the method lies in the fact that if he is lightly hooked he may get free, especially if you have no gaffer and have to drop your rod and run forward to secure him.

Only in exceptional circumstances do I use this method, but it is extraordinary how quickly

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you can land fish by it—long before they are exhausted.

One day, I remember, I had waded across to fish from an island, and the stream was too deep for my gaffer to come with me. Below was a rapid, and when I hooked a fish I ran down and away from the river, putting on all the strain I dared. In this way I dragged the fish towards the bank, and landed several up to  $3\frac{3}{4}$  lb. when still making their first run.

After fishing your beat for a few days you will learn exactly where the sea-trout lie; they hate being disturbed, and if they are frightened they will all leave, and the pool will be empty till fresh fish come up from below.

The streams and pools of a rapid, powerful river like the Laerdal are constantly changing, and twice it has been my good fortune to discover and be the first to fish a stretch that the gaffers thought was useless. On these two occasions the trout rose more freely and confidently than I have ever seen either before or since, and I think it was simply due to the fact that they had been there for some time without ever having been disturbed. Although I discovered these two new pools in different years and at different parts of the river, the incidents connected with

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both were very similar; I shall describe one of my discoveries—Øvre Kuvillard.

On the right bank of the river was a rush of rapid water and then an island composed of boulders. Beyond this again was a half-moon shaped piece of quietly flowing stream, and this gradually merged into the main river which rushed from the neck of the pool downwards and towards the left bank, in fact the rapid water formed the outer rim of the half moon, the good fishing water being inside this. The quiet water was about 50 yards distant from the bank. I asked my gaffer why he did not suggest that we fish it, and he told me that the pool had formerly been an excellent one for salmon, but that it had been completely filled up and spoilt by a flood a couple of years before.

I tried to wade across to it, but was nearly carried off my feet, and had to return to the bank. Next day the river was lower, and this time, with some difficulty, I managed to ford the rapid stream. Keeping well away from the quiet water, I walked down the island, and wading in at the foot began to fish. The fishable water was not 100 yards long and about 15 yards broad, varying in depth from a few inches to 3 feet. It looked ideal, rippling over a bed of moderate-sized boulders.

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The sea-trout rise to the dry fly best—much best—when there is a bright sun, and there were few clouds in the sky.

Just below where I started fishing, a small part of the main stream separated from the rest and joined part of the river I had already forded in a comparatively quiet little pool. I hooked a fish almost at once, and as he ran down stream I pulled him with all the force I dared use, towards me, and got him into this pool. I stationed my gaffer at the foot of the pool to try and frighten the fish back when he attempted to leave it, and after a good fight I netted the sea-trout. I waded back and started casting again, and almost at once hooked another sea-trout. And so it went on. Several fish were lost, but in about two hours' time I had landed eight fish,  $29\frac{3}{4}$  lb.

One of these fish was much larger than the others, and I had an exciting time with it. It refused to be guided into the pool I have mentioned, but went right down the main river and I had to follow at the run. At times I was almost over my waders, at times almost washed off my feet, but I gained the bank of the river with the fish still on. My gaffer had scrambled after me; but when I got the fish near the bank, he discovered that in his excitement he

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had left the gaff behind him. The fish lay in a fairly strong current, and a few yards below me trees hung their branches into the water, which was so deep that I could go no farther down stream. Whilst my gaffer was gone for the gaff I had an anxious time. I was using my old 10-foot split cane with which so many of my battles have been won, but once or twice I thought the trout would beat me. Once he went down stream about 10 yards farther than I could follow and I had to put my rod top in the water to prevent my line fouling the branches. I very gingerly walked him up; he followed meekly, and if my gaffer had only been there he could have got him. Once again the fish went down stream, this time still farther than before; but again he followed me when I walked him up, and just then I heard the welcome sounds of thudding feet and panting breath as my gaffer came running to me. The next minute the fish was on the bank, a really beautiful sea-trout of  $11\frac{3}{4}$  lb.

If one had time to think of it it would be nervous work crossing at the run a strong deep stream with a boulder-strewn bottom as I had to do in this case, but one is so intent on the sea-trout and his doings that one is almost oblivious to the risk of falling or being washed off one's feet.

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I remember on August 17th, 1926, I had some strenuous fording to do. I was fishing the right bank of a pool called Hegg. The river ran high, and what usually formed the right bank of the stream was a gravelly island, to the bank side of which a considerable stream flowed which joined the main river about 200 yards lower down in a rapid rush about 10 yards broad and 3 feet deep. I was fishing the main stream, casting my fly close to the island, in quite shallow water, when I hooked a fish. As usual he went down stream, and I ran after him. Practically all my backing had gone before I got through the strong water, but then I was on a grassy bank and eventually landed the fish—6 lb.—about 400 yards below where I had hooked it.

It was a hot sunny day, and I was puffing when I began to fish again. I had not taken half a dozen casts before I was into another sea-trout. This time the fish sprang high out of the water, and I judged him to weigh 10 to 12 lb. Then off he went down stream and off I sprinted after him. When I reached the place I had to ford, I knew I must have very little line left, so I tried to pretend to myself that I was on firm ground and went through on the run.

I actually had one foot on the bank when the

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last of my line ran out and I was broken. It was sickening to be beaten by a short head. I found I had lost only my fly, so I put on another, and almost at once hooked a third big sea-trout. This time the fish ran up stream, but I knew what would happen, so I scrambled out of the water and began sprinting down stream.

The trout gave me about 10 yards start and then followed me. The going on the boulder-strewn island was very difficult, and I had most of my backing out by the time I had crossed the side stream, but my 10 yards start proved invaluable. The fish never showed and seemed very heavy, and I had gone more than a quarter of a mile before I got on terms with him. He was foul hooked and weighed 8 lb. My next proceeding, I confess, was to take off my shirt and hang it in the sun to dry whilst I smoked a cigarette and tried to cool down!

At night, when the light is failing, it is impossible to see your dry fly, and moreover at that time the sea-trout rise readily to the wet fly; I prefer a teal and silver to any other fly.

I had a strenuous time one evening at the tail of the Ne Bø; a good lie for sea-trout. On the left bank between Ne Bø and the next pool below, Charlie Bø, is about 300 yards of the worst going

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on the entire river—and this is saying much. When the river is low you have to scramble over a surface composed of rough boulders varying in size from a loaf to a coal-scuttle; many of them are loose and tilt over when you step on them. The river here is broken and rapid.

I had fished down Ne Bø without a rise till I was within a few yards from the end of the pool. Then I hooked a sea-trout and had to stumble and scramble after him. He weighed  $3\frac{1}{2}$  lb. I went back and at once hooked another, foul, of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  lb., which gave me a great run—or rather scramble—of a couple of hundred yards.

Back I went, and again at once hooked another fish which went down stream like the others. We had almost got to Charlie Bø before I saw him, and when he did show himself I saw he was too big for the net so I sent my man back for the gaff. Meanwhile I had managed to get the fish into a small backwater, and thought I might tail it. I waded in, but when I bent down to grasp it it dashed through my legs—an awkward position, standing in fairly deep water, your line between your legs, your rod point down to the water to prevent the line coming in contact with you, your back to a heavy sea-trout which is careering down the river at top speed. I had

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to do an acrobatic feat of throwing one leg high in the air and switching my rod point under it as I twirled myself round.

The performance went off successfully, and I actually managed to get up to the fish and tail it before my gaffer returned. The fish weighed  $8\frac{1}{2}$  lb.

I have already pointed out how differently from sea-trout salmon behave when they are first hooked. I think I had an example of this in the experience I am about to tell. After some days when the river had been too large to allow me to get to Øvre Kuvillard, I managed one morning to scramble through the rough water and reach the shingle from the edge of which one fished the pool. Keeping well away from the water, my gaffer and I walked down to the foot of the island.

Whilst we were doing this, I looked at the water I was going to fish, and saw seven big fish, lying in water not more than 2 feet deep. Six were evidently sea-trout of from 4 to 8 lb., the seventh was a fish of at least 25 lb. weight.

I told my gaffer I thought from its size that it must be a salmon; he agreed that he had never seen so large a sea-trout, but thought that no salmon would stay in such shallow water, especi-

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ally as there was an excellent salmon lie in water 6 feet deep within a few yards of where the fish was.

A cold wind was blowing down stream and towards my bank, and I feared it would be very difficult to get my dry fly to the right spot. I crawled along on my hands and knees to the water's edge and, still on my knees, crawled through the shallow water till I was near enough to cut my fly so that it fell in front of the fish.

After about a dozen successful casts, as nothing happened, I crawled back to land and rejoined my gaffer. The fish still lay at the same place, evidently undisturbed. I told my gaffer that I was more certain than ever that it was a salmon from the fact that it had disregarded my dry fly.

Having taken off my dry fly and substituted a teal and silver, I marked, in my mind's eye, the exact spot where the fish lay, and then made a wide detour and waded into the river some distance higher up. From here the wind was in my favour, and I was able to cast a long line and drop my fly into the stream and work it as it passed slowly towards the bank and over the fish's nose.

At once there was a quiet rise, and as I tightened I had the satisfaction of feeling I was fast.

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And now I was certain it was a salmon I had hooked, because instead of the instant mad rush of the sea-trout there was—nothing.

I hurried to the bank, and walked down the shingle, reeling in as I went, and still, apart from an occasional jerk, the fish made no sign. I was fishing with my old 10-foot split cane, but I could trust my rod and trust my tackle, and I felt I was being insulted by being ignored in this way, so I began steadily to reel up.

My rod was bent to a semicircle, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I could force my reel to go round. Gradually, however, foot by foot, I recovered line, and presently the big fish came into view. Then, like a flash, he wheeled round, sprang into the air and then sped into the deep water. As he jumped I lowered my rod point, but when he fled there was no delightful screech of the reel, but instead only a horrid jar—he had broken me. I found that when reeling up, some of the very taut line had been pulled under the looser line already on the reel and jammed it.

Just opposite the place where I lost this fish, the river bank was about 3 feet high. A strong deep stream hurried along, but a small alder bush hung into the river, and below this, for about

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20 yards there was fairly quiet water for 2 or 3 yards from the bank. I had never troubled to fish this, but one night I had finished for the day and was walking homewards down the river bank when it struck me that it might be worth a cast. I had my small rod, and a wet-fly cast with two sea-trout flies.

I cast into the rough, and allowed my flies to come right round to the bank. I had not taken a dozen casts, when, right in the rough deep water a salmon rose and was hooked. I had little hope of landing it, as trees prevented me from going more than 50 yards down stream. Several times I had almost all my backing out, thrice I walked the fish up from the bottom to the top of the pool, and gradually I became more hopeful.

Eventually I got it into the quiet eddy behind the alder bush. By this time it was almost dark, and when my gaffer, lying on the bank, tried to gaff the fish, he merely scraped its back, it made a dash out into the stream, my dropper fouled a branch of the bush, and I was broken!

Although I had lost this salmon, I had discovered quite a good cast, and got several fish here at other times. One evening I had tried three different flies down this short stretch, and had not had a rise. The river had fallen low,

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and the flies I had been using were small. Before leaving the pool, I thought I would try just one more fly, but could not see any in my boxes that I fancied.

By mistake, a 3-inch Gordon had been put in the box of tiny flies, and I suddenly remembered that it had been given me by a friend who had advised me to use it at the end of the day when all else failed. I put it on, and was surprised to hook and land a very small grilse—3 lb. The next evening that I was fishing here I was even more surprised, because with the same fly I landed a sea-trout weighing barely 1 lb.!

Before I finish my reminiscences of sea-trout in Norway I must describe just one more day—August 9th, 1926. I was fishing the Hunderi beat, the day was bright, the air crisp, and the river low—I began at the tail of the pool, and found the sea-trout rising freely. I got no large ones, but by lunch time had netted fourteen weighing  $28\frac{1}{2}$  lb., the biggest weighing  $4\frac{3}{4}$  lb.

In the evening I began farther up the river, above “Hugie bridge.” I was soon into a fish which, as they always do, went down stream. The river is rapid as it goes under the bridge, and the trout looked as if it would pass under the bridge and escape me. My gaffer ran ahead

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and began splashing his net in front of the trout, and actually managed to turn it and net it. It was foul hooked and weighed  $3\frac{1}{2}$  lb. The gaffer had broken my net during the morning in trying to land a big fish, and the net he was using was a local one big enough to land a salmon, mounted on a 10-foot pole.

Below the bridge the bank was formed artificially by large rocks, and a wall separated it from a hayfield.

Walking down the hayfield and peering over the wall, I saw a big sea-trout lying a long cast out. Kneeling behind the wall, I cast my fly well above the trout, but when the fly was still a yard above the fish it was seized by a smaller sea-trout I had not noticed. The trout was firmly hooked and sped away down and across the river. I ran along the bank and got the fish up to the net a couple of hundred yards lower down. My gaffer got the net under it and was lifting it to the bank when the netting burst and the fish fell through it back into the river.

Its escape seemed to have given it a fresh lease of life and it went off at top speed, but my hook still held firm. I shouted to my gaffer to hold the net up, and as quickly as I could I passed my rod through the hole in the meshes, and rushed

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after the fish. About 100 yards farther down we pulled him ashore; another  $3\frac{1}{2}$  pounder.

Then we went a quarter of a mile farther down to Hunderi and presently I was again playing a sea-trout, this time a fish of about 6 lb. When I called for the net, my gaffer confessed he had left it behind, as he thought it useless!

There was nothing to do but to try to drag the fish on to the bank, but when I did so, the hold gave way and the fish was free. I made my gaffer go back and bring the net, and we mended it as best we could, though the string of which it was composed was very rotten. We succeeded, however, in landing four more sea-trout of from 2 to 3 lb. each with it.

By this time it was getting too dark for the dry fly, so I walked back to Hugie Bridge and had a final cast with wet fly below the bridge on the other side of the river. The river here is banked by a high wall and above this runs the high road. At the foot of the pool trees prevent you following any fish you may have hooked. The pool is about 300 yards long, and, at the top, is quite shallow near the wall, so I waded a considerable distance out in order to cover the best water. I had fished only a few yards when I hooked something big.

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It was now eleven o'clock, and fairly dark; I had no idea how large the fish was, but I was certain it was a good one. I realized the issue depended on whether I could get him to the quieter shallower water by the wall before he got to the trees. I put on all the strain I dared to guide his downward course to the bank. Nearer and nearer he came to the bank, but also nearer and ever nearer he got to the trees.

I won, but with not 10 yards to spare, and brought him up to the net. My gaffer slipped it under him, raised the net with the fish in it and —the entire bottom fell out and fish and net went with a splash back into the river! I had been angry with my gaffer before when he left his net behind, but I more than forgave him now when, without a moment's hesitation he dropped on the top of the fish and emerged from the water with it clasped in his arms. It was the best fish of the day, and weighed 12 lb. My catch for the day was twenty-one sea-trout— $56\frac{1}{2}$  lb.

## CHAPTER XI

*Trouting in Sweden—Styria—The Dancing Fly—A wet day on a lake—Trout in a little stream—A flooded river—Luck on the high road—A convenient hole in the bridge—Vive la France!*

I HAVE twice fished in Sweden, but my memories of the country are not of the happiest. The first time I was there I went as the guest of a friend who took a river in the South of Sweden on the strength of an advertisement which said that 1,200 salmon were caught there every year. I think that the advertisement was probably true, but when we arrived at the spot we found that the fish were caught by net, and every pool was netted every day by a perfect army of men who worked steadily from dawn till night. The fish were famed all over Europe for the delicacy of their flavour, and a large cannery was erected on the bank of the river; the chief work of the cannery consisted in opening tins of canned American salmon and putting the contents into

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other tins which had the name of the Swedish river on them. We never even got a rise to our flies.

The next time I went was to a trout stream on the railway from Trondhjem to Stockholm, at a place called Gefsjön. I was the guest of Captain Chetwynd who had a comfortable house on the Indal river and I looked forward to a month's fishing for big trout. Unfortunately, it was August 2nd, 1914, when I arrived, and I spent the week I was there in vain endeavours to arrange to get back to England.

I fished, it is true, but my heart was not in the sport, and I longed to be able to get home. I arrived in the afternoon, and got twenty-two trout weighing  $17\frac{1}{2}$  lb. that evening. Early next morning I went back to Trondhjem but found it impossible to get back to England, so I returned in the afternoon to Gefsjön.

There are only two incidents of my stay worth recalling. The first occurred one morning. I had fished, wet, with three flies for two hours without a rise. I then hooked three fish at once. They all sprang out of the river when hooked, and were from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 lb. in weight. Two broke me; I landed the third— $1\frac{3}{4}$  lb. I have so often seen a similar incident that I feel sure that when trout are not rising it is often because they are not looking

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for flies. If one trout rises, the other trout near by look up to see what he is rising to, and if they see a fly, follow the example of the first fish.

The other interesting experience occurred one afternoon when I was fishing the river where it flowed from a lake. I first fished the outlet and got several good trout, including one of 3 lb. 4 oz. Then I went to a pool lower down below a waterfall. With my first cast I hooked a very big trout which ran across the river and broke me. I was disappointed at losing the fish, but thought I would more than compensate for my loss with other big trout, as the pool looked an excellent one. But after fishing for about half an hour I gave it up in despair, not because I could not get a rise but because every time my flies alighted on the water I hooked one, two or three fish varying in size from a quarter to half a pound; as I was keeping nothing smaller than a pound in weight, I got tired of pulling the fish to the bank, taking them off the hooks, and putting them back into the river. I think this is the only time in my life that I have been driven from a pool by the number of trout that took my fly.

After being at Gefsjön for a week, Mr. Seymour, who was then our Minister at Stockholm, wired to say that Norwegian boats were sailing from Bergen

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to Newcastle. We packed up our belongings, but just as we were about to start, he sent another wire: "Unsafe to travel, North Sea mined."

By this time I was getting desperate, and argued that if the Norwegian steamship company could risk their boat, I could risk myself, and so departed, and arrived safely at Newcastle.

In 1912 Mr. Lockhart-Mummery and I had a most instructive fishing tour in Styria. We fished various streams, but the best was a little river at a place called Kainish, a few miles from Aussee. I had been fishing the Topdal in Norway and joined Lockhart-Mummery at Treves, and thence we motored to Styria.

We arrived at Aussee one evening near the end of August. After dinner we went out to the Gardens close to the hotel at which we were staying. A band was playing excellent music, the dark night was illuminated by lights hung on the trees, at one side of the Gardens the river tumbled down a series of rapids, the foaming water looking almost phosphorescent in the electric light. The fashionable Austrians promenaded along the paths, dressed in peasant costumes, and through the trees you could see, 20 or 30 miles away, impossible-looking pink mountains evidently still bathed in sunshine.

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We paid 20 kroner (about £1) a week each for our fishing tickets for the river at Kainish and were not allowed to keep the fish we caught. We had two ghillies; each carried a large barrel filled with water on his back, and the trout we caught were put in these, and, later on, were transferred to a fish pond, and from this were sent, as required, to the hotels at Aussee.

The two ghillies were very different. One, Josef Kebel, was, I think without exception, the best man I have ever had to ghillie for me. He was as agile as a monkey, as sharp as a weasel, desperately keen, very cheerful, and most expert with the landing net. He knew no English, but I have lived in Germany for a year and so had no difficulty in talking with him.

We taught him one sentence in English; he never learned what it meant but brought it out in crisp staccato on every occasion. When we met in the morning, for instance, he would greet us with a smiling "Morgen, now we shan't-belong!" The other ghillie was a slow muscular lout whom we called Mr. Hawksley-Badger. We gave him the first part of his name from his habit of spitting in a disgusting way every few minutes; our noses suggested the latter part.

In the morning, after a breakfast of crisp nutty

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rolls, excellent butter, boiled eggs, honey and delicious coffee, we would set forth with our ghillies. We took train up to Kainish; the gradient all the way was about 1 in 50, and the river tumbled and foamed past us as we climbed. At Kainish the character of the river completely changed, and was like a fairly rapid dry-fly stream. We had no waders, but it was so small that in most places we could cast across it right to the opposite bank. It was absolutely clear, and in many places alder bushes lined the banks. The bushes were tall enough to enable one, unobserved, to get close to the trout, and yet not too high to interfere with casting.

We soon discovered that the best way to catch the trout was neither with the dry fly nor the wet, but with what we styled the "dancing fly." This method consists of fishing wet with two flies, the dropper being attached a couple of yards from the tail. When you see a trout—every trout in the river was plainly visible—you get as near it as you can without disturbing it, and then cast well above and beyond it. You then raise the point of your rod till the dropper is just dipping on the surface, and as it nears the trout's nose you give a fine tremor to the rod which makes the fly dance on the surface of the

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water. The trout found it irresistible. Much the best fly we found to be the March Brown.

The trout were not large but very strong; we kept nothing under 10 oz. and our largest was only 2 lb., but my average catch was almost 20 lb. a day.

At lunch time we would make ourselves comfortable on the short green turf under some tree and have a roast chicken, excellently cooked pastry, fruit and a bottle of really good wine.

Near Aussee there are several deep lakes, and we were told that trout up to 30 lb. had been caught in them. The method the natives adopt is to fix a dead trout of about a quarter of a pound on to strong spinning tackle with a heavy lead. You row out in the evening where there is a dead calm, and drop your bait over the side of the stationary boat and let out line till you touch bottom thirty or more feet down. You then reel in about a yard and begin alternately to raise and drop the point of your rod, in this way bringing your bait a few feet up and letting it sink again.

We were told that if we persevered with this movement for about a week we might quite possibly hook a fish. We had neither the time nor inclination to do this, but thought we might possibly get a big trout by trolling. One morning it was cold and wet, so we decided to go to

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a lake called Grundelsee and try to get a big fish. Presently there was a tug at my line, but when I reeled up I saw I had hooked a coarse fish of about 3 lb. We got several of them; what they were I know not, but we never saw any big trout.

Meanwhile the weather had grown steadily worse, there was a constant pour of icy driving rain, and, notwithstanding our mackintoshes, we were wet to the skin, and shivering with cold. Dark sombre pine woods surrounded the lake, and the country, at the part where we were, seemed devoid of habitation, but our gaffers told us that there was an inn only about a quarter of a mile away through the trees.

We landed, and presently came to the building. The interior consisted of one room, about 20 yards long and 15 yards broad. At one end were a few tables with chairs grouped round, at the other was an enormous fireplace and near it not only all the furniture of a kitchen but of a bedroom as well. A couple of yokels sat eating and drinking at the round tables; hens, ducks and cats wandered about in search of food. At the other end, by the fireplace, three generations of the innkeeper's family hung about.

The place, however, looked clean, so we went up to the fire and soon had divested ourselves of

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most of our wet garments, which we hung up to dry whilst we tried to thaw in the warm glow. Presently we sat down and ate quite a good omelette, black bread, butter and cheese, and washed it down with excellent beer.

It rained very heavily all that day, and next morning when we went out of the hotel, we found the river a raging torrent. Josef Kebel turned up as usual, and was quite hopeful of our prospects at Kainish. It was a bright sunny morning, and we determined to go as he urged, for we had had quite enough of Grundelsee, and there seemed nothing else to do.

When we arrived at Kainish, we had to wade knee-deep along the high road to get to the river. The water was still quite clear, but froth, sticks, and rubbish prevented us from seeing any trout. We put on minnow, and splashed along the edge of the stream. After an hour's fishing I had not touched a trout, and when I joined Lockhart-Mummery and found that he too had seen nothing, we decided to go home. We were splashing our way to the station when to our astonishment we saw, congregated behind a hayrick, about twenty good trout.

We put on fly and began to fish, and the trout rose readily. That day I actually landed forty-

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four trout, not one of which was caught in the river. The best trout of the day I got on the high road, as I was walking to the station. A high bank covered with hazel bushes was between the road and the river, and I never suspected that I would find trout there. I saw this fish when I was still some distance from it. It was quietly swimming up the road towards me, taking an occasional fly as it came. I dropped my fly over it and got it with my first cast.

Near the top of our fishing the river ran for about half a mile through a fir wood, the trees were packed together and hung right across the river, so that fishing was impossible.

One day Josef told me that a big trout was reputed to live in the stream by a saw-mill which was farther up the river. With some difficulty I got my rod and myself through the thick trees and presently arrived at the mill.

This mill stood on the left bank of the river; the right bank was formed by a precipice about 20 feet high, and a broad temporary bridge made of planks stretched from the right bank to the first storey of the mill.

We got on to the bridge and Josef lay down and peered through a small gap in the planks. Yes, the fish was there, he told me, so I, too,

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lay down and could see the trout some 20 feet directly beneath me. But how to fish for him was the question. It was impossible to put a fly over him from below the bridge, and the only place from which I could fish for him above it was so near him that he would certainly see me. Yet it was very annoying to have come all this way in vain. I told Josef that even if I could not catch him I would at least try to hook him. The hole in the bridge through which we were peering was hardly big enough to allow me to get my reel and hand through, but Josef brought out his great knife and enlarged the opening.

Lying flat, I shoved my rod through and dropped my fly over the trout's nose. He rose, was hooked, and presently went down, out of my sight, into a fairly narrow run below. The moment Josef saw I had hooked the fish, he sprinted across the bridge and disappeared into the mill.

Meanwhile I continued lying flat on my face feeling rather helpless and foolish. My line was running out rapidly, and most of my backing had gone after it when suddenly it stopped and I heard Josef's voice in the far distance shouting he had got the trout. He had run downstairs, out of the door on the ground floor, round the back of

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the mill till he came to the stream below, and was just in time to slip the net under the trout as it went splashing past him—truly Josef was an excellent ghillie.

I have fished but little in Germany, and in France for only five minutes. I was crossing the Seine in Paris when I saw a most intent angler. I went down to him and asked him if he had had any luck. "Mais oui!" he said proudly, and produced a diminutive jam jar with water in which two fish—gudgeon, he told me they were—were swimming. I should think they were 3 inches long—no, I have told the literal truth all through my narrative and I shall not begin to exaggerate now; they were  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches. He had a microscopic hook and a piece of worm on it as large as a pinhead.

He invited me to try his rod, but I had no success. I admired that man. He reminded me of an eagle I had seen years before in a small cage in the East End of London. It was sitting gazing fixedly at a rat hole in the floor of the cage, and the keeper told me that two years before a rat had ventured into the cage and the eagle had caught and eaten it, and ever since it had watched the hole. The Frenchman no doubt had, like the eagle, a narrow cage, and could not afford

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to go farther afield and catch larger fishes, but he was a sportsman, and did the best he could.

We live in a dreadfully prosaic age. If fairies appeared they, no doubt, would be prosecuted as vagrants, ogres would be put in criminal asylums, and dragons caged in Zoos. We are herded along the beaten track from birth till death, and there are many who would like to take away even more of our individualism, and make us communists. Even most of our so-called sport consists in paying to see professionals doing what we cannot and have never even tried to do ourselves.

But, thank God, the love of sport is not yet dead, and if the record of my fishing adventures has quickened the sporting instinct of my readers to a more active life, I shall not have written in vain. I have had some thrilling battles. I hope for even more strenuous fights. I shall continue so to hope; perhaps the best will be on the Styx, for as Andrew Lang says:

Within the streams, Pausanias saith,  
That down Cocytus valley flow,  
Girding the gray domain of Death,  
The spectral fishes come and go;  
The ghosts of trout flit to and fro.  
Persephone, fulfil my wish;  
And grant that in the shades below  
My ghost may land the ghosts of fish.



